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FRANCE

A STUDY IN NATIONALITY

BY

ANDRÉ SIEGFRIED

PROFESSOR OF ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY AT THE
SCHOOL OF POLITICAL SCIENCES, PARIS

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PREFACE

Most foreigners think of French politics in Shakespearean terms: "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." I would adopt a Goethean point of view in this respect and say that, if "even Hell has its laws," I see no reason why French political life should not have its own. Indeed I believe that the spirit and the rules of our public institutions can be easily understood and clearly explained, and such is the aim of this essay.

A brief foreword may not be out of place in explanation of the reasons and circumstances which have led me to take a keen interest in the study of French politics. After completing my university years, I desired to choose politics as a career, and accordingly tried to secure a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, but after renewed efforts it appeared to be impossible; in the constituencies of my own town my tendencies probably did not fit, and in every other constituency I was considered a stranger. I gave it up, but I had learned the rules of the game and had felt deeply interested because instead of books and documents I had been in touch with men. I then decided to compile a psychological and political geography of France in our days: after five years of work I published a book called *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest,* which in my mind was only the first of a series of five or six books that were to deal with the other parts of the country. But it was 1914 and the War stopped my effort.

When peace came again, instead of continuing my study of France, I was called by circumstances to

visit the principal Anglo-Saxon countries, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. It was an opportunity to observe democracy as practiced with the Anglo-Saxon spirit and methods. Instead of the aggressive and somewhat negative individualism of the Latin civilization, I saw political societies based on social coöperation. At bottom it seemed to be a contrast between the Catholic and Protestant state of mind, religion leading to extraordinarily different consequences.

Such a comparison, together with this new experience of foreign countries, renewed my interest in the politics of my own country which, I must say, I had never ceased to watch day by day since the time I had thought I myself might be an actor on that stage. That is why, when the Williamstown Institute of Politics asked me to give a series of lectures on that very subject, I accordingly accepted the proposal.

A. S.

Williamstown, Massachusetts.
September, 1929.

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FRANCE: A STUDY IN NATIONALITY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION—THE FRENCH CHARACTER

France does not resemble any other country, for her conception of production, of politics, and of life is essentially her own. Also the scale of values in the modern world has altered to such an extent that generally she is not understood and is often isolated. To those of the French who do not travel, this statement would seem paradoxical in the extreme, for they would be tempted to believe that the civilized world still looks in their direction, just as it did a century ago. The wellspring of our influence is still living and fresh, but the world has changed. We are mostly appreciated by those who preserve a certain conception—now out of date—of individuality, liberty, and culture. This conception gives us our numerous, although sporadic and nearly always individual friends. One is bound to think of France in terms of individuals!

Economically France is not the contemporary of the countries which lead the world today, a fact we must bear in mind if we are to understand French politics. The United States, Germany, and even England are all of recent formation economically. We are watching the American captain of industry and the American workman develop under our very eyes, and the German business man is the creation of the last two decades of the nineteenth century only.

The French personality, on the contrary, was a

finished product by the end of the eighteenth century. Our peasants and artisans both come from the Middle Ages, and deep heart searching reveals that every essential of our character already existed at the time of the Revolution of 1789. We are not a new country, and like all other highly developed organisms, we are staid and do not take kindly to change. We are hard because we are old. Among so many peoples who are young or rejuvenated—sometimes almost childishly so—the French give a definite impression of being adult.

Since the completion of this our national individuality in that already far distant past, two world-wide forces of tremendous consequence have arisen: first, the industrial revolution has transformed all methods of production and indeed every aspect of material life; and secondly, the development of the countries overseas has been so rapid that the very center of gravity of the planet has been altered and all our traditional measures of greatness and even the comparative proportions of the nations have been completely upset. France was great in the last century with her 204,000 square miles, but where is she today with the 2,900,000 square miles of the United States?

The transformation of the world goes deeper still, for we are now confronted with an entirely new theory of life. Quality has given way to quantity, the individual to the gang or the machine. In a word, humanity has entered upon a new phase. But what is to become of France, conceived and constructed for another age? If she is to adapt herself to these new conditions she must alter her outlook on life, the character of her production, her manner of liv-

ing, and her ancient conception of political life, which some of us still believe to be in the forefront of progress. Or is there possibly still a corner in this modern world for France, born of individuality and the revolution? The problem is almost tragic, for what is really at stake is the French personality and the original character of a civilization.

Now, French politics happen to be less than anything else adapted to the preoccupations which are now dominating the world, and this contrast will provide the basis of the present essay.

I

Social Conditions Which Influence French Character.

Even after a century of intense industrial life, the social structure of France is still essentially built up of peasant, artisans, and *bourgeois.*

In spite of the drift to the cities, which seems to be part of the normal development of our western civilization, the mainstay of French life is still the peasant. The census of 1921 estimates at 54 per cent the rural population of France, as against 49 per cent in the United States, and only 20 per cent in England. In contrast with the English farmer and the grain grower and stock raiser of the United States, the Frenchman may be considered as the very type of the peasant; a small landowner and solitary worker, who lives by cultivating his own plot of land. Out of 8,591,000 farmers in France, 5,000,000 are their own masters. This is a point of supreme importance in our study of the French viewpoint, for the peasant heritage is always close

at hand even in the heart of the cities; and although they may be far from the land the French continue to feel and react like peasants. Paul Morand speaks of the extraordinary persistence of this peasant spirit: "It is the vegetable garden, the pride of our middle and working classes, which even in this age of machinery draws the Frenchman to the soil. It is the vegetable garden with its strawberries and radishes that means home to him out in the colonies, while to the British the chief preoccupation is tennis or golf. At the end of his day's work the English miners depart to play football, but the French miner, being essentially a peasant, goes into his garden."[1]

Industry has by no means influenced French character to the same extent. Even after the Treaty of Versailles, which has shifted the center of gravity of the nation to the metallurgical industry in the northeast, one may still say that our great manufacturing production remains strictly localized and that its influence does not permeate the mass of the people. No doubt Flanders or Lorraine, taken separately, would deny this impression, but if we study the statistics, we realize that industry as such occupies only second place in the economic system of the nation. Out of 21,721,000 individuals who make up our working population, 6,181,000 or 28 per cent only, can be counted as contributing to manufacturing production. Again, out of these 6,181,000 only 4,027,000 or 69 per cent draw regular salaries, but of the remainder, 1,162,000 or 19 per cent are workers on their own account, and no fewer than 683,000 or 11 per cent are employers of labor. If we note that British industry is made up of 90 per cent wage

[1] Paul Morand, *Paris-Tombouctou,* p. 84.

earners, 6.3 per cent workers on their own account, and only 3 per cent employers, we can well comprehend the difference in the structure of the two countries. France contains far more small employers, and above all a considerable number of independent workers free from the discipline of collective production. Furthermore the staffs in the great factories are astonishingly small, for according to the census of 1921, out of four million wage earners there were only 774,000 in plants having more than five hundred workmen.

The secondary importance of the working classes is reflected in the limited number of trade union members, only 1,846,000 in 1925. In this same year the *Confédération générale du travail* had only 605,000 members[2] and the *Confédération générale du travail unitaire* only 525,000 in 1928.[3] Even these two figures are actually overoptimistic, and yet they seem exceedingly low, especially if we recall that during the 1920 period of prosperity the membership of the British trade unions exceeded 8,000,000. As a matter of fact, and although the number of persons engaged in large plants is increasing (as the 1931 census will doubtless show), France remains primarily a country of craftsmen.

We find typical craftsmen on every side, such as the village joiner, who can, if necessary, make a piece of fine furniture; the mechanic of the small town, who could construct an automobile as well as make repairs; the dressmaker, who also designs dresses; and also the nurseryman and the wine

[2] *Year Book of the International Federation of Amsterdam, 1925.*

[3] Figures given by *La vie ouvrière.*

grower, who should, I think, although both country people, be classified with the artisans. These people are so wrapped up in their work that they occasionally dream of it at night till it becomes part of their very being. Often they have a knack for solving problems which seem far above their comprehension. In this age of Henry Ford, France may seem out of date; nevertheless it is in the individuality of the worker, if only it can survive, that lies our true personality.

France is also a country of *bourgeois*. For our word *bourgeois* I would suggest as a definition: "a man with some accumulated savings." As a type the *bourgeois* is complex, mingling caution and ambition with a high sense of proportion. Class egotism exists side by side with devotion to class, while materialism rubs shoulders with culture. Our *bourgeois* values property for the independence it gives him, an independence that guarantees him a standard of living which not only distinguishes him socially, but also provides an inheritance for his family.

As M. Johannet rightly notes, "The *bourgeoisie* is the result of an effort born of self control." This effort to attain a certain social standing for the sake of the children is nowhere more common than in France. In this sense almost all French people, including even many Communists, possess the *bourgeois* spirit. One can hardly say that Americans have the *bourgeois* spirit, since there are no class distinctions in the United States and in nine cases out of ten the fruits of success are not in fact personally kept by the next generation.

In France, on the contrary, the *bourgeois* spirit is everywhere latent! The artisan, the peasant, the

small shopkeeper, and indeed all the little people come under this heading. The well-kept houses, where the linen although mended is in perfect order, are typically *bourgeois,* especially in comparison with other countries, where the careless housekeeper will hurry through her mending and finish it off with safety pins! We find the same thing if we look into a Frenchman's private account book. He usually has contrived to make both ends meet, even if the state budget is in deficit. This is in striking contrast to the English community, where the private budget may show a deficit, while the state finances generally will be balanced majestically. Finally we must note the astonishing instinct for saving, which lies deep in the character of every Frenchman.

It is no wonder that a foreigner is completely at a loss when he tries to understand us, let alone judge us, for he has no opportunity of meeting the people that we consider most typical of our country. How could he possibly get into contact with the peasant? Also we must not overlook the fact that to an American the word peasant means a serf attached to the soil, and therefore he often judges our agricultural workers erroneously.

The visitor will run up against a craftsman if he has occasion to have something repaired, that is, of course, if he does not throw the article away instead. If he chances upon the traditional type of French workman he is first amazed and then often enchanted as if someone had presented him with a new and rare specimen. With the *bourgeois* he can only hope to have the most formal relationship, for he will seldom be invited to dinner in his home, and over this it must be confessed there is a good deal of heartburn-

ing. If he were to have access to the life of our *bourgeoisie,* he would discover that the French, whom he imagines rather fast and addicted to night life, are quite the reverse and follow a rigid routine of work, occasionally so severe indeed, that even he himself would rebel against it. In brief, those of us who mix with foreigners are generally not representative of the French people especially in respect of their political life. On this point, I dare say, many Parisians are quite as ignorant as foreigners, for one can frequent the salons of Paris for months without coming across a single Frenchman who is politically of the right vintage. It is in the provinces, and only there, that one must look for the men who really count politically.

II

Economic Conditions Influencing French Character.

The France of today is not economically what she was before the War, and yet her chief economic feature remains the same, for she still feels independent economically of other countries.

Looking back, the best description that one can give of pre-war France is that it was a happy country. Many other countries had a larger foreign trade, but France enjoyed the fortunate situation of scarcely needing the outside world either as a market for her manufactures or as a source of raw materials, a fact which was reflected in the small foreign trade, and especially in the low volume of our exports, for which we earned the reproach of our expansionists. Nevertheless any adverse balance of trade was automatically adjusted without the slight-

est difficulty either by our investments abroad or by invisible exports. These easy circumstances, coupled with the self-sufficiency of the nation, led to a widespread feeling of economic security, in spite of the political insecurity of a menaced frontier. This feeling of economic security nations like England can never understand. Other countries were apt to feel envious about this, for by our undisguised self-satisfaction we showed only too clearly how indifferent we were to the rest of the world.

This atmosphere, as M. Paul Morand recalls, is not entirely of the past: "Other countries may be parts of a continent or of the world but France is an integral unit, a separate entity, not in the least interested in Europe although Europe is certainly interested in her. One can almost feel the German villages quiver at the sound of a Russian army manoeuvre and Spain gets quite worked up over an attempt on the life of a governor of one of her Moroccan dependencies. London, the nerve center of the world, trembles and with cause at the announcement of a new oil gusher in Mexico or a political murder in the Punjab. But Paris, egotistical Paris, never turns a hair! News of universal upheavals come flickering over the wires, are passed on to the editorial staffs and caricaturists, and then to a mocking public which makes limericks out of them. On leaving France one has a distinct feeling of having freed oneself from a contented domesticity and avoided the dangers that lie in living with one woman who suffices.'"[4]

Basically this description still holds good although France is now more concerned than before with in-

[4] Paul Morand, *Lewis et Irène,* p. 51.

ternational affairs. Her imports of raw materials are heavy as she is obliged to go abroad for all her cotton, for more than nine-tenths of her wool and raw silk, for at least one-fifth of her coal, and for over half her coke and practically all her oil. On the other hand she has within her own boundaries almost all the foodstuff she requires, and although her colonial produce naturally comes from overseas her imports of meat are negligible and decreasing. As for wheat she produces almost 90 per cent of her consumption, but in a bad year she may need as much as 15 or 20 per cent imports. If we compare this with England, where the imports of meat amount to two-fifths and wheat to two-thirds of the country's consumption, we can appreciate that the anxiety that haunts all importing countries is never felt in France.

The export situation is very similar. France sends abroad principally prepared or at any rate refined foodstuffs, raw materials that have been partly worked till they can be classed as half-finished products and high grade manufactured articles which, though not necessarily luxuries as is usually believed, are nearly always of high quality. In 1928, wearing apparel and textiles accounted for 46 per cent of the exports of manufactured articles.

Since the War we find a surprising increase in our exports of raw materials, a remarkable innovation in a country like France. Expressed by weight our exports in 1928 reached the total of forty-one million tons; thirty-four millions represent raw materials, of which thirty-two millions are ores or half-finished metal products. This development is due to the acquisition of the Lorraine iron and steel industry,

which has an important bearing on our balance of trade as a whole.

The proportion of our manufacturing production, however, that is exported is relatively low. Certain exceptions exist, such as the silk industry which sends abroad 50 to 75 per cent of its production, and steel which exports sometimes up to 40 per cent, but other industries of equal significance export relatively little. The woolen industry for example exports only one-third of its production, and the cotton industry only 3 per cent of its yarn and 35 per cent of its piece goods, half the latter going to our own colonies. Thus we work principally for the home market, and again it is interesting to compare with England which exports four-fifths of her cotton, two-thirds of her metal products, and quite half her woolens, thereby creating an entirely different atmosphere, one might say a different economic climate.

The effects of this balance on the French attitude toward other countries can hardly be overemphasized. From the moment that a country is not obliged to go abroad for its foodstuffs or to market its own products, it ceases to be interested in the affairs of the world in general. Many of our most important exporting industries, such as the women's fashion trade, do not even need to look for their foreign customers in other countries, for these foreign buyers flock to Paris every year by hundreds of thousands and what they take away with them must be reckoned as invisible exports, as it does not appear in the government trade returns. Under these circumstances the export complex, as Freud would say, hardly exists in France, although certain ex-

ceptions exist to prove the rule, such as Lyons, Alsace, Bordeaux, Paris, and the North. The French manufacturer pays little heed to other countries; and instead of worrying about new markets, he is anxious to keep intact what he has already, and especially his home market. Only international matters of first rank can ever hope to command the attention of the French Parliament. A maritime or colonial question will only interest some fifty members, and leave completely indifferent three hundred others. Contrast this with England, where the representative of the exporter, the shipper, the financier of the city of London always has the last word.

III

French Character.

A Frenchman is above all an individualist, and therein lies not only his strength but also his weakness. He wants to be self-sufficient intellectually, and similarly some hidden instinct prompts him to make himself also self-sufficient economically. To acquire a little property, a little house, a little business, a little income from investments is the dream of millions of French people, a dream that is narrow and devoid of romance. It is the counsel of wisdom, if you will, but the result borders on mediocrity.

The Frenchman is said to be sociable . . . yes, so long as he is assured of stimulating conversation. Where his family, his business, and his private affairs are concerned, he is reserved and almost impenetrable. In no other country can one feel so utterly alone as in France, where people barricade themselves in their homes as if they were fortresses.

Yet these same people are usually charming and even prepossessing if you meet them on neutral ground. All the Frenchman desires is to be independent, and to this end he will amass and hoard his hard-earned savings in order to build a little house, even at the price of endless efforts. It is always this personal independence—possibly under another name—which he hopes to secure in his old age, and which he values above worldly success. "The most striking characteristic of democracy is that it is anti-social," writes Alain, who concludes that every democratic movement in contrast with natural association, has an antisocial tendency.[5] This is a far-reaching assertion, and actually is true only of France, for the Anglo-Saxon democracies are hardly based on that kind of individualism, in fact they are perhaps the reverse.

With such basic traits the Frenchman has many serious faults. He is even unsympathetic at times. It must be admitted he is incurably suspicious—as suspicious as a country lawyer and with no thought of granting credit even when it would be his advantage to do so. He is jealous, partly by envy and partly by a latent fear that the rich and powerful will dominate him. He is astonishingly devoid of sentiment when his interests are at stake, and he takes into his calculations matters that seem to have but the remotest bearing on the subject. He is wonderfully calculating about matrimony and equally so when it comes to adding to the population. Although they had certainly never heard of Malthus, the French *bourgeois* and peasants of the nineteenth century were really the first Malthusians. When at

[5] Alain, *Éléments d'une doctrine radicale,* p. 139.

last he considers himself independent, with enough for his own wants, he ignores with beaming self-satisfaction everything that does not appertain to his own community, almost to his own person. Materially he falls into a rut and geographically he shuts himself off as if he were alone in the world.

Yes, all this is true, but part and parcel of it is a brilliant quality which, in the apostle's phrase "covers a multitude of sins." The Frenchman is essentially an adult. He looks life straight in the face, with no trace of hypocrisy or childishness and with no illusions. If you talk with him he has something to say, for he has usually pondered much on the problem of life. He is wise with a wisdom based less on books, magazines, and newspapers than on personal experience and a time-honored tradition passed down to him by earlier generations. At present when the achievements of the masses dominate everything, he bears aloft the torch of individuality. In spite of all we may say he is a superb idealist.

Corresponding to these national characteristics, we find a traditional conception of production in France, which is threatened by the present transition to new methods and habits of life. An instinct for work dominates the peasant, an instinct irresistible as a natural law, which binds him to the soil by a tie amounting almost to devotion.

These inspiring lines from François Mauriac are not in the least exaggerated: "Ceres has more worshippers in France than Christ, for the peasant has one religion only, and that the religion of the soil. He possesses the land . . . or rather he is possessed by it, for he consecrates his life to it and the land devours him alive. A veritable sheet anchor was re-

quired to attach to the land a part of the human race which was destined to nourish the rest.'"[6]

Anglo-Saxons can neither understand nor love our peasants. The intensive toil of our cultivator bowed over the ground from dawn to dusk, is it progress in the light of the eight-hour day of the British workman? Does not such passion for independence fly in the face of modern evolution based on coöperation? And does not the narrow conservatism of the small proprietor lead to a narrow selfish routine that is really an insurmountable obstacle to progress? In this almost unconscious antagonism lies the gulf that separates an industrial from an agricultural democracy. The industrial worker lives by a type of production that is more complex and more collective, in immense agglomerations where independence means nothing and a recluse cannot survive. The cultivator wrests his livelihood from the soil which lends itself more readily to individual exploitation and admits of a more relaxed relationship between proprietors, whose work is similar and independent rather than coöperative. Now the English, by contrast, have been enticed away from the land by a century of intensive city life, until they have lost that love of the soil so characteristic of the French. They look upon the country as a place to spend their holidays and no longer understand the peasant type of civilization which they neither admire nor envy. We, however, appreciate the strength of the peasants and what they mean to a country; in fact we respect them to such a point that politically we hardly ever antagonize them.

The character of our working man is well ex-

[6] François Mauriac, *La province,* p. 31.

pressed in that most French of French traditions, the honor of work well done. If he is not discouraged by inadequate pay or disgusted by bad conditions of work, he will be absolutely devoted to his trade and his workshop. As any captain of industry will tell you, for intelligence and initiative he is unsurpassed the world over. In spite of the great changes brought about by modern methods, the spirit of the craftsman survives with us to an amazing degree. Referring to the poor quarter of Orleans where Péguy lived in his youth, the Tharaud brothers write: "This ancient type of civilization had a culture of its own formed partly by local tradition and partly by centuries of experience, and owing nothing or almost nothing to the outside world. These people still lived close to the soil, a community of peasant-workmen, of artisans who had hitherto been rustic. They brought to their workshops those old, old virtues of the land an unbelievable pride in work, and the religion of the task well done. This old world community resembled less the France of our time than the France of the ancient régime."[7]

This atmosphere of craftsmanship actually existed fifty years ago and its archaic substratum still lies close to the surface, for the past fifty years have not been able to replace the mark of fifteen centuries. Until recently the French culture was based on a civilization of peasants and small tradesmen. The industrial revolution created a superstructure, but it did not assimilate the original foundation, and therefore even today we must take into consideration the effect of the artisan and the peasant on the French national character. Here again contrast with

[7] Jean et Jerome Tharaud, *Notre cher Péguy,* p. 19.

England is interesting. The Englishman has a perfect genius for trading, he deals in constantly changing values and handles them with an ease which we can scarcely comprehend. But Big Business generally remains a closed book to the Frenchman, who is still as eager as he was in the Middle Ages to create a masterpiece and still old-fashioned enough to linger over a fine bit of work.

Meanwhile, water is running rapidly under the bridges, and we are living in a great industrial age. The French mind, as expounded three centuries ago in Descartes' philosophy, has nowadays proved itself capable of "rationalization"—but, after all, theoretically that is not remarkable. In the manufacturing world, as well as everywhere else, the qualities and faults of the French are true to type, as they always arise from the same source, individualism. Unlike the Germans the French are never tied down to organization. In reality they put more faith in their own intelligence than in the experience of others, no matter how reliable, being almost too inclined to believe that by taking thought they can accomplish anything. "Self-help" will work miracles, no doubt, but it cannot replace preparation, method, discipline, and patient coöperation. Although the French understand organization as well as anyone, they will coöperate only in emergency. Normally they prefer to work alone, and rarely believe that anything can surpass the sterling worth of the individual or that collectivity constitutes an end in itself. In the scholastic sense they are nominalists, for to them the world is made of individuals. The French political mind is saturated with this philosophy, while another conception appeals to the German and American.

IV

French Citizenship.

According to the Chinese it is right and proper to steal from the state in order to support an aged parent. At heart the French share this opinion, for according to the dictates of their conscience the family certainly comes before the state, and their obligations to the community seem far off and unreal. The emphasis they place on the home is simply a form of intersexual egotism, while the molecule which forms the family provides a social cement of incomparable solidity. In the last analysis the nation loses nothing for in this family pride, no longer individualistic, lies a latent altruism. In a critical period, the state has always had completely at its disposal great reserves which however had not been accumulated in response to civic virtue.

As the essence of the French nation is social rather than political, an outsider will often mistake a rowdy parliamentary session for a serious national crisis. In a way, France resembles China, where life does not follow any political plan but is attracted to a center of gravity lying far deeper and therefore more stable. We are the despair of the political moralists of the best tradition, for we never mean to borrow our prosperity from our political institutions. As the penetrating and delightful Robert de Jouvenel observes, "France is a happy land where the soil is rich, workmen are ingenious, and wealth widely distributed. Politics are the concern only of those who have a bent that way but are not the condition of their life."[8]

[8] Robert de Jouvenel, *La république des camarades,* p. 4.

We must now consider the conception of wealth which arises from this. It is peculiar to France, and as the War has not altered it, it affords an interesting anachronism. In France riches are not regarded as public property as they are in England but are, on the contrary, entirely a private matter. A Frenchman does not place his money at the disposal of the community, and if by chance it falls into the hands of the state it is quite against his will. At the back of his mind is always the thought that his savings are not for the benefit of others but for himself or at any rate his heirs. The French do not give generously to charity. One does not hear of a magnificent donation to universities or social institutions, as in England or America. The use of wealth with us is less considered as a social duty, according to the feudal tradition, than under the aspect of the right which we have to keep it and defend it, according to the *bourgeois* ethics. This idea, hard and clear as one may glean it from the writings of Balzac, gives the nation a foundation of astonishing solidity. No matter what an ass a man may make of himself politically, as an individual he will stand firmly on his feet, so that being perfectly self-possessed, he may indulge in any foolishness he likes in the realm of ideals. We are too inclined to look for the typical Frenchman among the people who frequent the Paris salons, or among the southerners, so eloquent or astute. Actually we are more likely to find him in the great central section of the country, amongst the brown-haired brachycephalic *bougnats* in the province of Auvergne. How thickset and awkward they are, and how indefatigable when it comes to gathering in the shekels!

Could the spirit of citizenship ever hope to flourish in such an atmosphere? Hardly, I think, if we take the Anglo-Saxon meaning, which is that morals and personal interests work closely together toward the same material ends, for obviously this aspect of citizenship is not French. This is perhaps because we have drifted away from Protestant ideals, for as soon as we cross the Swiss frontier it reappears.

We have our own type of citizenship, however. Ask a Frenchman for his money to save his country, and perhaps he will not give it to you, in fact at the very moment when he shows himself ready to sacrifice his life. But appeal to him if you are defending, not a political platform of interests, but ideals like liberty, equality, or the Republic, and you will find yourself surrounded by hundreds and thousands of enthusiastic supporters. Anyone who has been in personal contact with our electorate knows also that it can be swayed by sentiment quite as easily as by its own interests. Such a conception of citizenship is limited no doubt, since it comes from a party spirit which expands and rises above itself, but it is real. It gave us the revolutionary citizen of 1792 and the *quarante-huitard,* the *bon républicain* of Gambetta, the militant supporters of the Left and possibly of the Right, the militant syndicalists, and it may be many of our communists. It is somewhat akin to the classical citizenship, made up of the *Conciones* and the *De Viris.*

This list of qualities and faults—it is not easy to say which are qualities and which are faults—is exceedingly perplexing to the foreigner, who, when he attempts to judge us, frequently goes sadly astray. He considers us frivolous, while in reality we are

serious, methodical workers; he finds us changeable, although we stick to our opinions through thick and thin; he thinks we are tricky, but high professional conscience is as common here as anywhere; actually we are more *bourgeois* than he is himself, as conservative and well balanced, but he insists that we are revolutionary; he fears we are decadent, but the race is socially sound and biologically indestructible.

Instinctively one turns to China for a simile: "There is a striking likeness between the Chinese and ourselves," writes Paul Morand, "the same passion for economy by making things last by repairing them endlessly, the same genius for cooking, the same caution and old-world courtesy; an inveterate but passive hatred of foreigners, conservatism tempered by social gales, lack of public spirit, and the same indestructible vitality of old people who have passed the age of illness. Should not we think that all ancient civilizations have much in common?"[9]

In fact these traits essentially belong to the old-world civilization of craftsmen and peasants to which I referred earlier, but they have been molded by social life and disciplined by an administration which has been fully aware of the importance of its task. One quickly notices the qualities which are lacking: the sense of what credit and big business is, a collective banking and industrial tradition as distinct from the individual worth of business directors, in fact, a national economic doctrine and the equivalent of Manchester and the City of London. We have of course, many centers of industry that are rich in genius and tradition, but geographically they are strictly localized, and any coöperation be-

[9] Paul Morand, *Hiver Caraïbe,* p. 17.

tween our captains of industry is quite recent. France, when all is said, remains a nation of scattered organizations.

V

France and the Industrial Revolution.

Out of this atmosphere has arisen a political system suitable to the individual and based on his needs. This system holds its own against the *ancien régime,* which, at least in its essence, allowed more for organization.

Now comes a new school of thought, chiefly from the United States, based on different principles which bid fair to dominate the world. Instead of personal work we are confronted with a theory of coöperation; instead of individualism, with discipline; instead of liberty, with efficiency. This new system, like ours, admits of political ideals which are not necessarily antidemocratic, but almost inevitably assert themselves as anti-individualistic. In the modern world emphasis is no longer laid on the individual but on the group.

What then is to become of France? Economically she would rather continue along the road of individuality and quality, but she is disposed if necessary to, and is certainly capable of, evolution toward mass production. No doubt she will prove sufficiently adaptable to make the change.

Politically, however, such an evolution is not in the way of being achieved. At the very moment when the France of 1789 is already superseded by new social structures, she is still obliged to devote a great deal of her energy to struggle against the tra-

ditions of the *ancien régime*. In fact she does not feel tempted to give up the ideology of the individual in favor of a program of social efficiency. She remains then politically a community of small people, consecrated to a somewhat narrow individualism, suspicious of every form of economic hierarchy and largely indifferent to the mystical passion for production that is intoxicating and transfiguring the world of our time.

True, but let us not forget that although this democracy may appear mediocre, it is teeming with brains and intelligence, alert and ready with infinite possibilities. It is for this very reason that France, as it sticks to ideals of the pre-industrial phase, is politically behind the times. If the individual is to perish in the effort for collective production, France also will perish. But if it is written that the individual will reappear triumphant, France also will rise eternal.

CHAPTER II

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FRENCH POLITICS

In French political life certain qualities seem to be permanent, such as the individualism originally inherited from the Gauls, which is now innate in our character.

Instead of organized parties on the English model, we have political groups that are as uncertain and changeable as clouds, and with no real discipline. The individualism of France is negative in comparison with the constructive individualism of the Anglo-Saxon Protestants; in fact, the two schools of thought are so definitely opposed that one needs entirely different sets of words to express the two ideas. Our political combinations are unstable, but their tendencies are remarkably fixed, for even after fifty years we often find the same political tenets still adhered to in some districts. They still, although the party labels may have changed, represent the solid foundation of our political history.

Another thing that we are apt to overlook is that we are satisfied with our own mode of life, so contented, in fact, that we cannot picture any other. The social structure built on this foundation is possibly the most solid basis of the nation, for the daily routine of the French people is ingrained in their very being—the wine at every meal, the black coffee after lunch, the little garden tended so lovingly, and the modest café where they chat and play cards with their friends. Watch a mason in the South lunching under the trees at noon, or a French *gendarme* lin-

gering over his coffee, and you will agree that there is something in our atmosphere which you can neither replace nor carry away with you. Danton spoke truly when he said that we could not take our native soil away on the soles of our shoes. France means to us a way of living on which we are all so entirely agreed that scores of things are taken for granted, no matter to what political party we belong. In this sense one might say that the most progressive are really the most conservative.

Our discussions on practical matters are thus anything but sensational, and although they may be ably, even brilliantly presented, they only interest the specialist, so the game as a political game is hardly worth the candle. In France a policy of interests rarely pays, for as Albert Thibaudet remarks: "Our political life is autonomous, and it is not a supplement to economics. . . . If a party puts 'Interests' on its banner, absolutely nothing doing!"[1]

On the other hand we get quite worked up when we discuss persons and personalities, and the position of the individual in the community—especially if theory enters in! Even such a simple matter as our own personal theory on the point entails endless debates and floods of eloquence. Principles and ideals are the heart and soul of our politics, but their eventual application often remains a matter of *quasi* indifference. This subtle connoisseur, Robert de Jouvenel, rightly observes: "Our legislators are far less interested in the contents of the bills before them than in the resolution closing the debate."[2]

[1] Albert Thibaudet, *La république des professeurs,* pp. 157, 256.

[2] Robert de Jouvenel, *La république des camarades,* p. 89.

This explains the carefully prepared speeches to establish the exclusive claim to some great man long since dead and gone, or to some glorious national heroes over whom, anywhere else, there would be no doubt whatever. If we are not quite sure what group Vercingetorix would now back, at least we do know that the church claims Joan of Arc as belonging politically to her, and so the posters in the windows on her saint's day give us an exact map of clericalism and anticlericalism in Paris.

The municipal disputes over the names of streets are even more amusing. Such excitement when it comes to voting for the title to be posted up on the walls, whether it is to be Boulevard du Maréchal Foch, Place Anatole France, or Rue Ferrer! The animated discussions which arise in this respect really amount to opposing to each other various conceptions of life, politics, and man, and they disclose within those militants full of "sound and fury" a fine imaginative power. In the end they all go off peaceably to a café, and probably nothing is changed.

Party divisions—political tendencies, if you prefer the term—are based on opposing conceptions of life, and the instinctive personal reaction of like or dislike toward a certain social order. During the past century we have had two main lines of cleavage, first, the French Revolution and whether or not we accept it and its consequences, in which case the contest is for or against the *ancien régime,* and secondly, the intrusion of capitalistic production into the social system born of the eighteenth century, in which case liberty and individualism, the moving forces of yesterday, defend themselves against collectivism, the invading force of today. The Revolu-

tion was still the outstanding issue up to 1848, but later and especially at the end of the nineteenth century, the question of capitalistic domination became entangled with it, without, however, supplanting it. Thus we must consider the parties, according to whether they are based on the Revolution or upon the industrial problems that are steadily increasing in importance.

I

The Parties Born of the French Revolution.

Even today, 150 years after the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the French Revolution has not yet been accepted by everybody. Do we, or do we not, agree with the spirit of 1789? That is the point. It is not a question of the republic versus royalty; the issue lies much deeper. "You are rallied around the republic," said Léon Bourgeois to certain Orleanists on the morrow of the Boulangist imbroglio. "That means nothing. Do you accept the Revolution?" The line of demarcation is not where we expect it to be, for except among the masses the number of devotees to the Revolution is surprisingly small.

Underlying the spirit of 1789 is the conviction that sovereignty is vested in the people; that is to say we are ruled from below, not from above. This presupposes equality of citizenship, at least in theory, but it does not mean communism, for we wish to keep our personal independence, nor yet real equality, for we are too practical for that. In the last analysis it is the confirmation, jealous and unyielding, of the theory of the dignity of the individual, a theory in which one still feels the passionate eloquence of Rousseau.

We find the same idea today when Alain makes his villager say: "The rich may use the high road for their automobiles as much as they like, but don't let them try to tell me that they are any better than I am! . . . If we must have inequality, I would like to hear some good loud shouting for equality at the same time."[3] Thus it is the working classes, i.e., universal suffrage, that must inspire the politics of the nation. Yet if we admit this hackneyed phrase, we get ourselves involved, for we implicitly deny either government by the social authorities (I mean the traditional ruling classes) or the right of the church to intervene in the affairs of the state. Resisting the claims of the adversaries of the Revolution thus amounts to assigning limits to the domain of the Revolution.

The social authorities to whom our theorists refer are certainly not recognized as such by the masses. Although they may not admit it openly, they would consider that they are entitled to govern the country politically as well as socially by divine right of wealth, and by birth. In the old days we were ruled by the king, the nobility, and the bishops; today it would be by the great landed proprietors, the captains of industry, the high officials of the state, the organized capital, and by the salons. . . .

When M. Thibaudet describes the rivalry between the well-off student and the poor scholar, Barrès as opposed to Lagneau or Burdeau, it is a case of the classes versus the masses. The former, however, do not understand the spirit of 1789. Wealth and birth have always been candidates for the government of mankind, and if occasionally they admit that their

[3] Alain, *Éléments d'une doctrine radicale,* p. 131.

power has only been delegated to them, they must not be taken too seriously, for at heart they believe that they rule by divine right. Some instinct out of the distant past always prompts them to bring the lower classes under their tutelage. "I doubt if a salon exists," says Alain, "where the hostess accepts the sovereignty of the people without question."[4] This is an actual fact.

In the case of the church the quarrel is more complex since doctrine is involved—a serious matter in a country where the political leaders are doctrinaires. Theoretically the church cannot recognize the complete independence of the state, but in actual practice she will admit the *de facto* independence of any temporal power provided it is admitted that it comes from above and not from below, or in other words is divinely inspired.

Under such circumstances the church leans toward authoritative government, and as the sovereignty of the people and the religious independence of the state are abominable in her eyes, it is not easy to foresee any reconciliation with the laity who are still faithful to the Revolution. In France the church is traditionally linked with the ruling classes against the practice of the Left, although she is undoubtedly extending her influence far beyond the aristocratic classes. Among her followers are to be found more workingmen than gentlemen, for she gives such wonderful personal protection to the families of the humblest citizens, and she often even goes the length of embarrassing the Radicals by her daring. And yet no politician of the Left will ever believe that the church could work sincerely for the republic.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

At this point the anticlerical party traces a boundary of such importance that it dominates our political life—to be anticlerical, of course, it is not necessary to be antireligious. In France, where strained relations perpetually exist between the church and the state, everyone is nominally Roman Catholic, and therefore some practical method must be found according to which politics and religion can be carried on independently. As a matter of fact, the French mind is trained to throw the clutch out with marvelous ease when religion and politics are to be kept in their respective spheres. The existence of the church alongside the republic would be impossible except in this atmosphere of intellectual liberty mingled with skepticism and subtlety, with a highly developed civilization behind it.

The following impressions written by an Alsatian friend of mine are interesting in this connection: "The French are not sufficiently mystic to be ruled by the Catholic Church. I sometimes think that the French Catholic has unconsciously come to an understanding with his church in order to quiet his conscience, to absolve himself in advance, as it were. He is thus completely at ease in his private life, perfectly poised and self-possessed, and without the slightest fear of the terrible impending deity who broods over the Germans."

I know of no more representative type of Frenchman than the anticlerical member of Parliament whose wife is a regular churchgoer, and whose daughters are at the convent. Jaurès was a case in point, as was once duly noted by a heckler at a political meeting. "My friend," answered Jaurès with good humor, "no doubt your wife obeys you. Un-

fortunately I am less privileged!" Everyone laughed, for they all understood and many were probably in the same boat. As a matter of fact, if the anticlerical Frenchman happens to have a pretty wife, he thinks it is just as well to let the priest keep an eye on her. This is the secret of our family life, but as in the Orient, common sense forbids our discussing it.

In the nineteenth century the various social classes, using the term without legal significance, were clearly grouped according to their political tendencies, for or against the spirit of 1789. In this connection let us first consider the peasant and the village craftsman, whose attitude—except where they came under the influence of the church—may be summed up as an instinctive resistance to the priest and the château. Sometimes today the nobleman and the priest may not be on the best of terms, but in the most rural districts the political balance of their claim to domination and the resistance to it still holds good.

Like the peasant and the artisan, the factory worker—a later social type—was originally imbued with the revolutionary spirit, but to an even more passionate degree. Class war came from other countries later on, but we had a working class movement of our own, which has not lost its significance even today. I can remember a time, not so very far back, when many workmen were simply republicans.

We next come to the small civil servant of ordinary birth and education, thoroughly under the thumb of an administration related to those in authority, but eager to emancipate himself under the banner of the republic which he felt belonged to him.

At the time of Gambetta the schoolmaster and the postman were the village enthusiasts for the cause. The middle and lower classes, who were always losing their more brilliant members as they passed on to better things, were all the more resentful of the snobbishness of the rich, and therefore loyal to an order working for equality. It was in these various groups that the budding republic found its most spontaneous and faithful supporters on the morrow of May 16, 1877.

On the other hand there are certain classes whose ideals are incompatible with the New Order: the church, for the reasons given, the nobility, which naturally clings to its traditions of hierarchy, and successfully enough too in some districts; and the *bourgeoisie,* promoted in its turn to a position of social authority. Each has its own satellites: the Catholics devoted to the priest, the poor assisted by the church and the rich, the small farmers fearing the great landowner, the tradesman of the village and small town frightened by the thought of a boycott, and finally employees, domestic servants, and laborers kept in a state of dependence. Wherever society is bound by hierarchy or organization, it tends to free itself from the spirit of 1789 in order to revert to other ideals. It is hard to realize how far tradition, sometimes in modern guise, still exerts its influence. The people with their naïve idealism always hope to win in the end, but the wise know that they are dreaming of a Utopia.

The line dividing these two groups stands out as clearly as the contours on a map. The people of the lower classes naturally only mingle with one another, and the rich and powerful also keep to

themselves. Both feel they are on the defensive, and so they are. In every French community we find the schoolmaster and his followers eager to emancipate the people, while behind the priest, the nobleman, and the rich *bourgeois* are lined up the conservatives, who consider that as the masses are incapable of governing either themselves or anyone else, they must keep them under their tutelage. The two temperaments are so definitely opposed that it is difficult to judge them fairly, for everything depends on the point of view.

"Those who are familiar with the provinces," says M. François Mauriac, "know that contemporary France was born of the mortal sin of envy. The peasant shuts his eyes and casts his vote for the Left, certain that he can make no mistake if he votes against those who wash and go to mass. He loathes any distinction in dress, occupation or ideas."[5]

It is true, and yet we cannot fail to admit there is a certain grandeur in this appreciation of personal dignity, a sentiment born of the Revolution. As the explosive power of this ferment is still anything but exhausted, timid foreigners, not unrightly, believe that France is dangerous country, for nothing is harder to swallow than the doctrine that every human being has the right to think freely, to form his own opinions, and lead his own life. This theory is feared alike by Anglo-Saxon Protestants and the Roman Catholic church, and everywhere the great majority implicitly condemns it. Our poor little village enthusiast seems to be fighting in the front trenches for humanism!

This is the key to French politics, which would

[5] François Mauriac, *La province,* p. 34.

be incomprehensible if we lost sight of the fact that the counter-revolutionary party keeps constantly rebuilding itself as its spirit crystallizes into new forms. Although it has long been threatened on the Left by the Marxians and Communists—whom it detests!—our democracy must still defend itself against the *ancien régime,* although it is now out of date, as its own followers are the first to admit. It is difficult to explain these things in a country like the United States, where reaction does not exist, or even in England, where tradition is not only accepted, but almost childishly revered by the man in the street.

These political creeds have left an indelible impression on the country. First there is the tendency to a constant outbidding in our political program, which seems to be the degenerate outcome of the popular belief that tomorrow will be better than today, and therefore we must progress at all costs—in other words, go to the Left. In this sense democracy is a living movement, and therefore programs are less important than relative positions, so no one ever has any luck who tries to fight someone more advanced than himself. Even if he happens to be a Socialist, he is sure to be called a reactionary, while the pure flame of democracy will invariably aid the Moderate fighting a Royalist. This is the essence of the great game of politics, as it is played not only in Narbonne or Toulon, but even in our most northern provinces. In purely business discussions such an attitude is perfectly absurd, but if we admit that our politics are based on sentiment, this mystic attraction to the Left, like that of the pilgrims to Mecca or the mad Captain Hatteras of Jules Verne

to the north, falls naturally in line with the general direction of democracy.

No party label can resist this attraction, for at all costs one must be—or seem to be!—the most progressive. On the first ballot many a southerner votes on principle for the candidate most to the Left, a method which, by carrying the system to its logical conclusion, also reaches the climax of absurdity! Describing a southern constituency in his deep and witty book, *Le monarque,* Pierre Mille sums up the situation in a single sentence: "They had a Socialist committee which was Republican, and a Republican committee which was Royalist." In this game the great trick is to spot them right, for the Radical-Socialists come to be only pale pink Moderates, Marseilles can offer us "patriotic Socialists" who swear by the royalist *Action Française,* and the Var is already preparing us Governmental-Communists.

I once saw a poster in a station in a little town in the western states which read in enormous letters, "See us increase!" This perfect expression of the boosting spirit would, if transposed into politics, delight the Mediterranean, where "progress" knows no respite. I remember hearing of a man in the Department of Hérault who, on meeting the local member who had been put up as a Radical-Socialist six months earlier, asked to what party he then belonged.

"Radical-Socialist, the same as you elected me."

"You don't say so," was the priceless reply. "Then you are making no progress!"

In this the South is simply a caricature of the rest of the country; yet, if we run for a seat, might we not safely follow the advice of Duo Caroli and exclaim:

"Don't lag behind. Don't mark time. We must get on. Let us show them that the Department of X is determined to progress!"[6]

Of course although there is a great deal of talk about all this, there may not be the slightest intention of putting any of it into practice. "We may as well discuss reforms," says the wise old "Monarch" of Pierre Mille, "but it might be dangerous to carry them out." It makes one think of the opera chorus which sings interminably, "March, march," without ever moving a step. How representative this prudent southerner was, who remarked, "To the Left, to the Left—but not further!"

Meanwhile our politics are so bound down by this logomachy that it has perverted the very idea of government so far as the parties of the Left are concerned. They feel instinctively that discipline is arbitrary, that order is reactionary, and that authority means tyranny. To them liberty is purely a negative claim, and when they are in power they literally cannot tell what is sound from what is unsound, as indeed, for that matter, most Frenchmen can't anyway. In private life we love method and order, so we lay down good rules because we know how to follow them. In public life, however, the progressive republican feels he must overlook disorder, for if he tried to set it right he would risk being called reactionary. In his opinion to govern is to be reactionary nine times out of ten—especially if he is not a member of the government. At any rate a hundred voters in the Radical-Socialist group are ready, waiting, to prove it. Thus we are paying for an arbitrary rule in the past, which has too long outlived its time.

[6] Duo Caroli, *Le manuel du candidat*, p. 144.

Alain describes power as essentially reactionary, always tending to become an end in itself, and unfailingly corrupting those who exercise it.[7] Pelletan, according to him, is the only man who has never betrayed it. Such is the experience of a country in which power has been autocratic—but can we ever hope to set up an efficient government if we are to be deterred by such fears?

These political theories are quite suitable to the electorate of peasants and artisans which we inherited from the French Revolution, before the great industrial changes took place at the end of the nineteenth century. Society then was not complex, being composed chiefly of independent landowners, with a simple organization of government and production. This old foundation, on which our present system is largely built, is made up of satisfied people, tending to the Left politically, but socially conservative. Beneath a coquettish froth of disorder lies an instinctive repulsion to anarchy, for apart from personal favors we really do not want social change—hence how much leisure to indulge in political controversies! This explains the curious indifference to reform among so many of the Radicals, although they always have the word on the tip of their tongue. "Resistance to authority rather than practical reform is their watchword," admits Alain, and really it is marvelous how satisfied these progressives seem to be with the existing social order! In our democracy, so daring in theory and so temperate in practice, any kind of political outbidding is safe and easy because it is developing in a sphere where change is not desired.

[7] Alain, *Éléments d'une doctrine radicale,* p. 123.

But what is to happen now that a new conception of production comes to transform the face of the world and disturb the balance of our social structure?

II

The Parties Born of the Industrial Revolution.

The French Revolution recognized only the individual, and ignored the working classes, as at that time industrial life hardly existed. The problems arising from the new conception of production only began to make themselves felt from about 1880 onward; in fact, they only came properly into existence at the time of the Revolution of June, 1848. It was only in the last decade of the century, when the Socialist party began to be powerful, that social questions really competed with the political matters which had hitherto exclusively claimed our attention. Although industry is still only of secondary importance in France, its repercussions have had a distinct political influence on our various social classes.

The transformation of the workingman was less marked in France, no doubt, than in any of the other great western nations, for our craftsman lingered on long after the industrial revolution. He was a fine type, imbued with professional honor, his very being bound up in his work according to true French tradition. Behind his barricades it was he who was mainly responsible for the revolutions of the past century, which drew their inspiration not from class hatred or revolutionary doctrine, but from a democratic ideal. He later became a Socialist, and again

it was he who originated the Socialist party and the *Confédération Générale du Travail.* His Socialism was always true to the ideals of the nineteenth century, and therefore he is not and never will be a true Marxian.

The factory worker of today, at least when transformed by mass production, is a very different type, for he no longer feels that he has a trade. Once a Frenchman has let himself become a servant of a machine he loses his pride in his work, becomes discontented and devoid of political conscience. In Paris the factory worker is the backbone of the Communist party, a fact which proves that machinery has exerted a fatal influence. Its introduction in France marks a step backward from the political standard of earlier generations.

Wherever our government administration has been industrialized, the small civil servant has undergone a similar change, although, if he happens to be isolated in a village he is still a simple and traditional enthusiast for political progress. In the latter case, I do not believe his psychology has altered, in spite of the fact that he now advocates Socialism and Communism, instead of the republic, as his father did fifty years ago. But if he is attached to an industrialized administration, like the post office in Paris or one of the large cities, his case is different, for he is then inclined to stray from the old democratic ideals which originally attracted him into the ranks of the Left. The collective demands of professional workers, class warfare, and the revolutionary spirit, lay hold of him, and he naturally joins one of the parties of social discontent.

The result of the industrial revolution has been

to turn the *bourgeois* to the Right. It brought him without struggle to the front rank socially, for the nobility were soon little more than a memory. Politically he feared the workman, who also was becoming an important influence in the state. Since the days of June, 1848, the *bourgeois* has shown himself in his true conservative colors, for he has abandoned, one after another, all the ideals he learned at the time of the Revolution. With a few rare exceptions the *bourgeoisie* now belongs to the party of resistance, and hardly any of its sons would wish to remake a democratic republic, I think, if it had to be done.

The religious evolution of the *bourgeois* has been no less marked. Up to 1848 he was usually a follower of Voltaire, although he felt that religion was a necessity for the masses, but after 1849 he suddenly began to regard the priest as a valuable aid to the police in keeping order. The salons eventually ceased fighting the church, although in the smoking-rooms the unbelievers still continued to rail against it. The generation that came of age at the end of the century was weary of excessive individualism, and longed for moral and social order. They rallied around Catholicism, not for the matter of fact reasons of their ancestors, but because they needed a constructive philosophy of life. Since the Dreyfus case and the War, religion has become an integral part of the convictions of the *bourgeoisie*. Thus in the past hundred years they have gone right over to the other side of the fence.

"Midway in his intellectual development, the writer or the politician," says Barrès, "finds that he must stop chasing his predecessors in order to deal

as swiftly as possible with his successors. He becomes a Moderate, as the expression goes." This is precisely what happened to the *bourgeoisie* when they were no longer irritated by the diminished ranks of the nobility. Meanwhile a Caliban, daily gaining in strength, began to push them into the background.

Where do the people stand in all this—I refer to the People with a capital P, of the mystical democracy which preceded Karl Marx and class warfare, the People of Michelet? They have changed little, for the spirit of conservatism persists with them as the small landowners with a stake in the country become more numerous. In France it is impossible to take liberties in the name of Marx or Lenin against the property of the small people, although the masses are still faithful to the mysticism of equality and democracy. At heart they are still inclined to the Left, not only against the church but more urgently against the dictates of capitalism. Recently one has discerned signs of a new demagogy, rural in character, attacking the great landowners on behalf of the small. Public opinion with us is still jealously hostile to Big Business, and although bankers and industrial magnates may exert all the influence they wish, they must not do it openly.

Have the French people become more international as the result of their contact during the War with the armies and people of the five continents? Theoretically, perhaps they have, although they still obstinately cling to their own customs and ideals, and are largely indifferent to new conditions. Feminism, prohibition, and departments of health, mean not much to them. They stand firmly between the

priest on the Right, whose leadership they refuse, anarchy and revolution on the Left, which offend their *bourgeois* susceptibilities, and finally decide that international Socialism does not suit either their habits or their routine. So they remain negative, and yet still sufficiently important to create a great unorganized but stable democracy.

III

French Politics Versus the Present Time.

The contradiction in French character is obvious. A Frenchman wears his heart on the Left and his pocket on the Right—and in practice every Frenchman has a pocket! His innate love of order—his own interests, to express it more crudely!—counteracts the extreme political ideas which delight him. This Don Quixote is accompanied by a Sancho Panza who never leaves him a moment. His slogan, "Always to the Left," is only used as a symbolic gesture, for his practical politics run up against barriers piled quite as high as progress stretches in front. This explains why foreigners treat us as dangerous revolutionaries when we talk, and as slow *bourgeois* of the old type when we do not come to the point. It also explains why we have been for a century on the offensive against autocracy in all its forms, and are now on the defensive against a form of production which we find disturbing. We remain the republic of little people, preoccupied, according to Alain, with the "continuous struggle of the small against the great." We are always ready to protect the small and weak, the little landowners, the little

employees, the little pensioners, and even the little cheats.

All the achievements of the present material epoch of supercollectivism will eventually be accomplished in France, but outside of politics. Our political structure belongs to an earlier period, and offers neither methods nor solutions for such a program. Possibly these great achievements are essentially antidemocratic, or at least not in sympathy with the democratic spirit which refuses to sacrifice the individual to the discipline necessary for cooperation. Although in this sense France is not politically adapted to the needs of the present day, I hesitate to condemn her altogether, for it may be that a vital instinct forbids her to make an adaptation which might in the distant future imperil the individual, who is the corner stone of her civilization.

CHAPTER III

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON FRENCH POLITICAL PARTIES

I

The Place of Foreign Affairs among French Preoccupations.

Foreign countries have never had much influence on the economic policy of France, where the electorate is very provincial and the producer is generally a protectionist, absorbed in his home market. Financiers with international vision, exporters, and even shippers are very few and far between.

Since the War, some of our members of Parliament have traveled a little, but usually they prefer to stay at home so as not to miss the Sunday banquet of the local fire brigade! In England, on the other hand, as soon as the session of the House of Commons breaks up, many M. P.'s take the next ships to the four corners of the empire—in other words the four corners of the globe. But how many members of the French Chamber have ever gone around the world? This indifference to foreign countries is reflected in the way we handle our international economic policies, for we are more preoccupied with our home trade than in securing new markets. I have observed at the various international economic conferences I have attended that France never asks for anything. The internationalists are rather resentful of our attitude, while the English in particular stir up indig-

nant protests against protection and attacks on the freedom of transportation.

The Frenchman would be as much a recluse politically as he is economically, if foreigners did not come to hunt him out. Military insecurity is a fact which must be faced, even by those who, like ostriches, systematically ignore the danger. We must remember, every one of us, that our frontier is close at hand and must be defended in an emergency. War for us means invasion, not just sending an expeditionary force to another part of the world, and therefore we readily accept a term of military service which would not be tolerated in most countries. Once it is over, we concentrate on our own concerns, thankful to have done with other people's affairs.

"One may say without exaggeration," writes M. Seignobos, "that up to 1914 our foreign affairs were exclusively dealt with by our professional diplomats into whose domain no one ever penetrated except occasionally the President of the Republic, the Foreign Minister, and sometimes the President of the Council. The public and the members of the Chamber hardly tried to be admitted in it—in fact, they hardly knew the names of the foreign countries concerned. Our foreign policy resolved itself into a horror of war without our having the slightest knowledge of how to avoid it."[1]

This was clearly reflected in the attitude of Parliament, for the divisions after the rare discussions on foreign matters always showed an enormous government majority which, however, had no relation to the real political strength of the cabinets. It

[1] Charles Séignobos, "La signification historique des élections françaises de 1928," *L'année politique,* July, 1928, p. 263.

was astonishing what a minister like Delcassé could achieve without his policy being supervised or even questioned in the Chamber. Suddenly on the eve of a crisis the Chamber would wake up and sweep away feverishly any minister who had been guilty of a daring diplomatic conception. In 1885, Jules Ferry fell because of his policy in the Tonkin War, and in 1905 Delcassé was deposed owing to the Tangier incident. The deputies will never forgive a minister whose policy eventually disturbs the peace of the electorate. My own experience as a candidate for Parliament before the War was that the electors did not want to know anything whatever about foreign affairs. In spite of their matchless patriotism, the French have neither taste nor instinct for diplomacy.

We deal with Europe and the world at large in our own way, according to a national tradition which originated with the French Revolution and came down to us by way of 1848. "In every country universal suffrage gave birth to twins: the national spirit and the democratic spirit," writes M. Étienne Fournol. "They are now at loggerheads but in childhood they were tenderly united: both indeed are children of 1848."[2] We may be inclined today to forget that the republican tradition is intensely patriotic and at the same time actively democratic and nationalist. In this, France of the nineteenth century was more the product of Danton than of Napoleon.

We need only recall Gambetta and his *Défense nationale* in 1870 and the unhealthy, repressed nationalism of the Commune of Paris in 1871. There was also the vote of the extreme Left at Bordeaux

[2] Étienne Fournol, "L'esprit démocratique français, est-il mort?" *Revue Bleue,* May 3, 1924.

in 1871 against the representatives at Versailles who were in the act of dismembering the country—Louis Blanc fighting the treaty and Rochefort, Ranc, Benoît Malon, and Félix Pyat, fervent Republicans all of them, resigning in protest. Their attitude was exactly the opposite of that which forty-five years later was to be called "defeatism."

This patriotic Radicalism, though now out of date, has exerted an active influence right up to the present time. General Boulanger was the product of this system, and Clemenceau was mindful of 1870 during his entire career. The same may be said of Berteaux, the millionaire, demagogue and patriot, who captured the imagination of the Parisians as Minister of War—in these nationalistic tendencies it was always Paris that mattered. Nor must we overlook that other Parisian, the then Socialist Millerand, who protested in 1895 that the presence of the French fleet at the inauguration of the Kiel Canal was a national humiliation. During the last war, those old guards of the Revolution, Vaillant and Jules Guesde, showed traces of this national spirit, which we find again in Painlevé and even in Paul Boncour. Nevertheless, our conviction that France is a great democratic nation and that in defending her we are defending democracy itself looks old-fashioned now beside the up-to-date ideas of other countries. For the real inspiration of contemporary international thought in Europe we must look to the Jews and the Protestants with whom the old type of Frenchman is never quite at ease.

In 1870, when Gambetta and his Republicans were building up politics on sentiment, M. Thiers, with the leading *bourgeois* at his back, was advising the people

to be reasonable and accept the inevitable, especially as it was already an accomplished fact. There was less exalted patriotism in the parties of the Center and the Right than in the extreme Left—so much so that for several years people felt that the very name of Gambetta meant war. A little later, when Ferry riveted public attention on the colonies, he was opposed by Clemenceau whose eyes were always rigidly fixed on the eastern frontier, for he never admitted the reality of the defeat. On the contrary, it was purely for defense and the maintenance of peace that that great *bourgeois,* Alexandre Ribot, deaf to the entreaties of the Radicals, signed the alliance with Russia in 1891. This did not escape the Alsatians who were still hoping for the return of the two lost provinces to France. They realized, I remember, that the policy of acceptance was already quietly replacing the policy of protest, for twice in twenty years the Moderates had counseled a reasonable national policy, while under Gambetta in 1871 and Boulanger in 1886 the Left had been carried away by patriotic fervor.

Meanwhile, the people did their military duty whenever it was required, although in 1871 at the time of Thiers they wanted peace. The republican enthusiasts in Paris and some of the larger cities wished to continue the struggle, and it was among them that the parties of "revenge" recruited their followers. Their theories, however, were not destined to survive the Franco-Russian alliance.

Public opinion in general, and especially among the peasants, was so hostile to the colonial policy that it could only be carried out surreptitiously. "Why spend money," they said, "and sacrifice the

lives of our sons in distant countries which we will never see and whose names we do not even know? Let us keep both our money and our children at home." The colonial empire of the Third Republic is the work of a distinguished group of enthusiasts, in which the explorer, the soldier, and the administrator carried more weight than the directors of the commercial undertakings involved but it was not a national achievement, as it did not command the assent of the public. This was conclusively proved at the famous session of March 30, 1885, when Jules Ferry fell beneath a torrent of abuse.

At heart, the French have never deviated from their determination not to indulge in a grand foreign policy. Tonkin, Madagascar, and Syria were undertaken by governments with their own conception of national prestige; but the masses were indifferent. When called upon to defend their country, to defend their land against the invader, the people respond to a man, and we can ask what we will . . . but otherwise for pity's sake leave them in peace.

II

The Change in Policy Since the Dreyfus Case.

Michelet once said that in the twentieth century France would declare peace with the whole world, and yet the new international ideals did not originate with him nor with us Frenchmen. Actually they have been inspired by other countries, for the world no longer looks to France and her ideology as it did in the eighteenth century.

The Franco-Russian alliance marks the end of an epoch in our political history, for once it was con-

cluded a new feeling of security prevailed in France, which had been lacking since 1871. As a result, the patriotism of Gambetta, nourished on bitterness of defeat and a pervading feeling of danger, suddenly died away, and toward 1892 Marxism with its bookish theories captured the younger intellectual element. I, myself, was dumbfounded, I remember, the first time I met a bearded student in the Latin Quarter, who emphatically informed me: "La Patrie, cela n'existe pas!"

Incited by the Dreyfus case, the French were soon mercilessly dissecting the military power, for while one side considered it the finest possible form of discipline the opposition declared it to be incompatible with democracy. Hoche, Marceau, and Bonaparte himself had been Revolutionaries and Republicans; but the general staff of the Third Republic was Royalist and Catholic. Theoretically—and in France it is theories that count—the army was henceforth divorced from the republic, the patriotism from democracy. International Marxism—the negation of *bourgeois* patriotism—was bringing in class war and abruptly pushing the old French revolutionary ideals into the background, in the younger set at any rate. Gambetta, who had been the idol of the preceding generation, suddenly went out of favor and has never returned.

These political currents corresponded to a new doctrinal attitude toward the problems of peace and war. Previously tame enough in its foreign policy and still imbued with *bourgeois* Orleanism, the Right began aggressively to preach nationalism as opposed to internationalism and class war. In its eyes the army stood for all the virtues of tradition, above

all for the healthy discipline which the republican equality denied, while the church regarded war as a chastening Christian influence. This was a definite conception of life and not without its beauty; but it denied the very principles of the democracy. So the Left was dragged in by a natural reaction to support the doctrine of peace and pacifism—pacifism was then so new that Henri Rochefort declared that it had been named after Frédéric Passy, its inventor.[3] After the reactionary period of Méline and the tumult at the beginning of the Dreyfus case, the Left came back into power under Waldeck-Rousseau. It was later, under Combes especially, that the pacifist spirit overflowed from political into educational circles and even into the army. The history books said as little as possible about battles; military displays, hitherto adored by the people, were reduced to a minimum, and the centenary of the Napoleonic victories, which chanced to occur at that time, was systematically ignored. Officially the Government was still patriotic, but its patriotism was rather shamefaced, and such a crisis of principles was something entirely new.

The dispute over the Dreyfus case was carried on so completely over the heads of the people that the masses were hardly interested. Being naturally inclined to exert themselves as little as possible, the people made the most of any slackening in discipline and were delighted when their requests for a shorter and easier term of military service were granted. Later, however, when the menace of another war meant renewed efforts, they consented with good

[3] Frédéric Passy was the initiator in France of the pacifist ideals.

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enough grace in face of the obviously growing danger.

Soon after 1905 the fine, almost Byzantine, freedom of our theoretical discussions ran brutally into the most unexpected obstacle, no less than the war menace which no one had really believed in for fifteen years. There was nothing for it but to prepare for the struggle, morally and materially, although at a time when conditions seemed to make it impossible for the country to achieve any kind of unanimity. The parties of the Right in no way desired war, and yet it fell so perfectly in line with their principles that they were almost tempted to score a victory for their side. On the other hand, the menace so completely shattered the new faith of the democracy in peace that the parties of the Left felt that the military preparations deprived them of their prestige and morally favored their adversaries. This contradictory situation was apparent at every turn from 1905 to 1914, while France was preparing for the coming war. The blow when it fell united the country, but at bottom we can still trace these two distinct currents of thought. Even today they still exist as the quasi-theological dispute of the Dreyfus case originally formed them, showing that the present attitude of the French toward war and peace dates back to that time.

Alain lays this problem on the dissecting table and with his implacable scalpel sets himself to discover why war or at least the doctrine of war should have shocked the idealism of the Left and yet found the Right in sympathy with it:[4] "War is a good thing in itself, say the Conservatives, for it main-

[4] Alain, *Éléments d'une doctrine radicale,* pp. 69, 239, 240.

tains power and obedience. Therefore, all Conservatives love war. . . . The high and mighty cannot bear the idea of peace, a fact over which the people would do well to meditate." Again he writes, "'France must come first,' cries the Radical. But, be careful, his adversary is saying exactly the same thing. If the country is to be the final and highest aim, we must come back to a system of force. . . . Therefore, the Radical opposes war because he sees that it supports the cause of tyranny."

Thus when the Right defends war, it is not war itself but authority; and when the Left condemns it, it is not so much war as the danger it brings to the democracy. With us our internal policy always comes first, and this justifies me, I think, in repeating that in our political parties we are in reality fighting over conceptions of life. For in the length and breadth of France you will never find a single person glorifying war or willing to justify it in itself as the Germans did before 1914.

III

Post-War Politics.

In politics, as elsewhere, the War did not create new conditions so much as amplify existing tendencies. The only new aspect of French politics is that international problems have been forced upon us "with the urgency of matters of public safety," as M. Seignobos expresses it. It is no longer possible for us to ignore these things, although in so far as we are free to use our own judgment it is still our domestic affairs that color and direct our foreign policy.

Since the war our international problems have been placed before us under four main headings:

1. *Security.* Four invasions in one century dispose of the easy ideals so dear to the English cranks, and on this point every French Government comes to the same conclusion, viz., that we must always be ready to defend ourselves in case war cannot be averted by a round-table conference or if our allies are late in coming in.

2. *Reparations and Interallied Debts.* The man in the street cannot be expected to understand the technical details, which we leave to the experts, and although the French public would have liked to oppose the argument of justice to debtors and sentiment to creditors it could not be put into practice. We have now become completely skeptical and are resigned at last.

3. *Organization for Peace.* After the deadlock of the Ruhr, which forced us to sacrifice many cherished illusions, we associated ourselves with the Franco-German agreement, and now are utterly weary of intrigue. This is the meaning of our active adherence to the League of Nations, which we were disposed to resent after the Treaty of Versailles, believing that the other powers only wished to get us to Geneva in order to deprive us of our rights. Idealists by tradition, the rank and file of Frenchmen are glad to declare peace with the rest of the world. It is only the French Protestant pastors who preach the League of Nations at us the way Ramsay MacDonald does, and his biblical moralizing nearly drives us mad.

4. *Economic Reconstruction of Europe.* It is the novelty of this last aspect that makes it the most

interesting of all, for the business men have joined forces with those who are working for peace, and in the present economic tangle they have bound themselves to support closer European relations. The international peace party and the commercial interests have found common ground—actually, they have been working together ever since 1924, if I am not mistaken.

What effect have the past ten years had on the attitude of the French public toward foreign affairs? The masses, and especially the peasants, have not changed a whit, for yesterday, today, and tomorrow they want peace and nothing but peace. Peace means to them a shorter period of military service and fewer taxes for the navy, the army, and military expeditions. We have, however, the doctrinaires of peace who theorize over peace, orthodox internationalists like the Socialists, missionaries for closer international relations, "committee-men" and "League-men" who believe with Jean Jacques Rousseau in the natural goodness of mankind, especially if mankind happen to be democratic. In a word, these people differ from the masses in that they are prepared to undertake a "*grande politique*" for peace in spite of its risks. The country will follow them up to a point, but then it will apply the brakes as it well knows how to do.

Opposed to these internationalists are those who conscientiously and theoretically believe not so much in war as in force. They are convinced that as man is a sinful creature we shall always have wars and rumors of wars, and, therefore, we must put our faith in armies, in diplomacy, and in treaties—in short, in the old order condemned by the dreamers.

It is chiefly the *bourgeoisie,* the parties of the Right, the salons, and the *Institut* that are still penetrated with this spirit, mingled with an old disdain of democratic ideals and Anglo-Swiss evangelism. When Alain says that the Conservatives cannot bear peace, he probably speaks in this sense and then is perfectly right.

Two serious defections have now come to weaken this group: first, the industrialists have learned that modern production can no longer be kept within national boundaries, and, secondly, the democratic wing of the Catholics, under the very eyes of the Pope, has lost its faith in the mystical and military regalia which Ernest Psichari and other enthusiastic converts to war-time Christianity adopted. This is the most interesting aspect of the separation of the nationalism of the *Action Française* from the new internationalism of the Vatican.

In the light of these things, let us consider the French Chamber, taking as our "nationalist" pole the Right Center and placing it not among the Catholic "Die-Hards" nor yet in the commercial section of the Center, but on the dividing line between the Right and the Center, in the *Union Républicaine Démocratique* or Mr. Marin's group—do not be put off by these eloquent titles! Many a member of this group still feels in a nostalgic mood when he thinks of the Rhine and regards with mute opposition Locarno and the ratification of the interallied debts. . . . Let us now put our "pacifist" pole on the extreme Left, not amongst the Radical-Socialists or the Communists, but exactly on the hinge between the Radical-Socialists and the Socialists: that is, in the very middle of the old *Cartel.* These people

are instinctively in agreement with the League of Nations, Locarno, the Franco-German agreement, and even the Franco-German commercial treaty, as they regard it as a token of peace and good will. The "*mouvements divers*" of a session of the Chamber, so subtle that they are beyond the power of our *Journal Officiel* to report them, reveal the centers of this cyclone and anticyclone as clearly as on an atmospheric chart. There seem to be two fixed axes, not at the extremities of the room but passing through the center of the Right and the center of the Left.

These two opposing tendencies, based on different temperaments, blow hither and thither like winds and sometimes work themselves up into a squall. For example, in 1922, a sort of pronunciamento was hatched up at the Elysée as a result of the Conference of Cannes, which overturned M. Briand and set up instead the first Poincaré Cabinet. Two years later the reaction against the Ruhr occupation caused the country to come into line with the policy of European *entente*. French politics seem to be bounded by two considerations: love of peace, linked up with dislike of effort, and the conviction that the frontier must be secure at all costs. We never get beyond this; in fact our politics have not changed in fifty years.

This brings us back to my original contention: that it is domestic rather than foreign affairs which determine our politics. Our internal problems divide the country into parties based on different temperaments, and these indirectly map out the reactions in our foreign diplomacy. However, we must live, and although France may be forced to be international

she is much more national than we realize. She is preoccupied with her home affairs and only interested in international matters when she cannot avoid them and then only when the other powers seek her out. This is at present the greatest obstacle to the widespread radiation of French thought.

CHAPTER IV

POST-WAR POLITICS IN FRANCE

I

The Balance of the Parties.

In the last chapter we pointed out the underlying contradiction in French character, which leans politically to the Left and socially to the Right, or as the old joke has it, resembles a Dutch cheese, red without and white within. The problem consists in trying to satisfy these two tendencies, which are logically irreconcilable.

The parties of the Left are ill at ease when in power, for to them the very act of government appears reactionary. They show a Jacobean vigor in moments of public danger, but only then, and never seem ready to support a strong government when it is not their own people who are in power. When it comes to good steady government—maintaining the army, keeping order, and passing bills of taxation—the members of the Left are never to be found, so the Prime Minister is obliged to fall back on the Right and Center for his support. It is the old story of spare majorities (just as we would speak of a spare tire), a method which has frequently become indispensable to the leaders of the Left, such as Herriot, Painlevé, Caillaux and the rest.

You may say, why not govern only with the Right? No one in France has ever yet succeeded in doing so, at least not for any length of time, because with us the Right does not only, or even necessarily, mean the

conservatives, but the church, or in other words, "reaction," to use the radical expression. A purely conservative program would not give us the vote of the masses. Remember that Thibaudet said: "No party which inscribes the word 'interests' on its banner can get anywhere." To obtain the popular vote you must have the church at your back, but then what happens? A government that depends on the Right for its majority soon finds itself compromised by having amongst its followers a number of personalities, well known by the provinces, who turn out to be the very people who have been systematically opposing the Republic. When the day of reckoning comes and the church is to be recompensed for its assistance, the people see through the game, kick, and the system goes to pieces . . . till next time!

We have put our finger on the constitutional weakness of every French Government. If it accepts the assistance of the Left it will not be able to balance its budget, and it is also certain to run afoul of the commercial interests. If it turns to the Right, the interests will be appeased, but the reactionary influence it has to submit to is sure to antagonize the secular and democratic convictions of the masses.

This cycle has repeated itself with the regularity of a pendulum for the past fifty years. When the Left is in power, it alienates the support of the "reds," if it attempts to govern, of the moderates, if it exasperates the interests by applying socialist measures. They are in a dilemma, for if they govern, even with their spare majority, they cease to be true to their principles, while if they stick to their principles, the routine of government is exceedingly difficult. In normal times such a situation can be tolerated,

but in a crisis we risk a catastrophe. The Center and the Right then spontaneously form a coalition, for instance, such as the *Bloc National,* or the *Union Nationale*—the name matters little, although, the term "national" nearly always shows a reactionary tendency. The procedure is the same in every case. But when the center of gravity shifts to the right with the natural consequences of such a trend, an equally spontaneous movement of *"défense laïque"* or of *"défense républicaine"* is released by the opposition and the pendulum swings back. Méline thus paved the way for Waldeck-Rousseau and the *Bloc* of the Left, and the same thing happened after the war when the *Bloc National* and the presidency of Millerand led to the *Cartel* of the Left.

This ebb and flow of parties is the clue to our political history during the past fifteen years. Partly owing to the logical interest of the French, and partly as a result of our ballot system (which allows, as one knows, a preferential vote at the second ballot) the Center has never been able to remain in power for any length of time, because to obtain a majority, it must either depend on the Right—which means the church—or on the Left which means socialism or even communism. The center of gravity thus alternates between the Right and the Left, but fortunately it can never wander very far from the Center —where, however, it is seldom poised for long.

The best Cabinet is one made up of members of the Left who are democratic, but not extreme enough to excite the business interests—I mean a mystic union of democracy, with a conservative as Finance Minister. The Combes Cabinet, with Rouvier in charge of the exchequer, is a good example of this. Again

in 1926 we had that old Republican, Poincaré, as President of the Council, and that same old Moderate, Poincaré, as Minister of Finance—but the stars are rarely so favorable. Then, although our public opinion is really remarkably stable, the play of these political waves gives an erroneous impression of instability. The Frenchman may carry his rifle, now on his right shoulder, now on his left, but he seldom falls into the ditch.

The ten years that have elapsed since the Armistice illustrate this swing of the pendulum. Let us now study the three principal periods of that phase: The *Bloc National* (1919–1924), the *Cartel des Gauches* (1924–1926), and the Poincaré *régime* (1926–1928 or 1929).

II

The Bloc National and the Cartel des Gauches.

In 1919, as anyone will remember, the fear of war, although so recently over, impressed us less than the gathering menace of Bolshevism, which positively terrified many of our *bourgeois*. This was one reason that we were not inclined to tolerate the aggressive attitude of the Socialists, when they clamored for a more privileged position in the state for the working classes. There was only a general feeling of discontent among the ex-service men, and a good deal of loud talk behind the scenes against the deputies, of whom a few certainly had taken the trouble to get killed at the front, though probably most of them had only managed to loot decorations for their services as station masters. The wave of anti-parliamentary feeling in the air was more notable than at any time

since General Boulanger or the Dreyfus case. As we felt we were on the threshold of a period of economic reconstruction, we naturally paid more attention to the technical men than to the professional politicians, and as a consequence the Left was drawn into a similar unpopularity. When people asked "Have you learned nothing from the War?" it simply came to mean that the old republican tradition was out of date, and that henceforth politics had to take an entirely new direction. It was in this atmosphere that the first election after the War took place.

The *Bloc National,* which won the elections of November 16, 1919, pretended to unite the country to the same extent as the *Union Sacrée,* which had been formed to combat the invaders; but unfortunately it soon disintegrated into a mere conservative union. The new Chamber inclined further to the Right than any since 1871, being composed of 180 members of the Left, 216 of the Center, and 221 of the Right.[1] The support of the Center and the Right gave the Government a crushing majority, all the more so as the political axis passed between the *Républicains de Gauche* (read: of the Right) and the *"progressistes"* (read: partisans of resistance), that is to say, through the Right Center. No doubt they were loyal enough, but certainly our influential political circles had never contained so many men so little republican in temperament.

This Chamber, although so different in composition from those before 1914, nevertheless reflected faithfully the France of its day, the France still panting from the effort of the War, eager to arise from her ruins, and apprehensive of any attempt to tamper

[1] See Appendix I, p. 115.

with the Treaty of Versailles and her sacred right to reparations. These considerations, so varied and yet so closely interwoven, kept us long on the defensive with regard to the League of Nations, and sent M. Poincaré into the Ruhr under the guidance of M. Millerand from the Elysée. Meanwhile owing to our expenditures in the devasted areas, for which we were not reimbursed from reparations, the franc fell in March, 1924, to the then record level of 138 to the pound sterling. The upshot was the formation of the *Cartel des Gauches.*

The elections of May 11, 1924, an expression of the opinion of the country, marked a turning point of first-rate importance. Although the results certainly were unexpected, they were obvious enough when all was over. Our intervention in the Ruhr had irritated a public opinion anxious for peace and impatient of such complications. Meanwhile the increasing power of organized capital did not escape the notice of the individualists, who in their anxiety to safeguard the democracy imagined quite wrongly that an alliance of some sort was being formed between the nationalists and the business interests. In fact, however, at the same time, the interests were beginning to realize that it would be to their advantage to fall into line with the present international European *entente.* By chance, at this moment another movement arose to increase the general discontent. Immediately after the crisis over the franc in March, 1924, Parliament passed a heavy budget of taxation and gave the Poincaré Ministry power to cut down considerably, by order in council, the number of official jobs. The civil servants who were affected, or who thought they were, indignantly joined the opposition. Meanwhile

the innocent candidates who were standing for election or reëlection, all accordingly promised to reduce the taxes. Let us say here that, although the contrary had been said every day since 1924, the country did not change in the political sense. The old superstition of the Left still held sway and the *Cartel,* made up of Socialists, the Radical-Socialists, the Republican Socialists, and the moderate wing of the Radical party, was marching under the same old colors, and making the most of their prestige.

In the new Chamber the Left had 328 seats, the Center 80, the Right 146, and the Communists 28 (the latter should really not be included in the Left). And yet in spite of appearances the coalition of the Left did not have a majority. Counting the 41 moderate Radicals who formed its right wing, it claimed the imposing number of 328 votes, but without these it fell to 287, while for a majority it needed 291. The more astute members of the *Cartel* were not deceived for a moment, since they realized that this so-called "red" Chamber was in reality socially only a moderate one, as without the 41 members of its right wing, who were conservative at heart, the coalition was powerless. In the excitement of what seemed an irresistible victory, the *Cartel* plunged heart and soul into a policy in line with their own principles, but which really led nowhere. The result was to be seen in a succession of political periods which follow each other as inevitably as the stages of an illness, and whose lesson is for the student a real and fascinating one.

During the first period, from June, 1924, to April, 1925, the jubilant *Cartel* was chiefly preoccupied with symbolic gestures, such as the deposition of the

President of the Republic, declaring an amnesty, removing the ashes of Jaurès to the Pantheon, and so on—all easy enough, as none of this concerned the commercial interests, with the consequence that the Government's original majority remained intact. On June 10, 1924, to take a typical division, all the parties of the Left voted in unison, 327 against 217, to condemn, in the person of François Marsal, the President of the Republic himself, and place him on the index, because he had too openly favored the *Bloc National.*[2] However, when they began to outline a financial policy which threatened the property holders, and above all dared to suggest a capital levy, the Chamber spontaneously appeared as being sharply divided into politicians and economists, and the superb majority of the opening days of the session melted away, owing to the defection of the moderate wing of the *Cartel.* On April 9, 1925, when another crisis in exchange was looming up, the Herriot Cabinet, then on its last legs, only obtained 290 votes against 242. The coalition had been reduced to the faithful few, and they were not sufficient to enable it to govern.

This brings us to the second period, from April, 1925, to June, 1926, during which the coalition, having lost their moderate wing, tried in vain to evolve a financial policy that would conform to their old principles and also meet the critical needs of the moment. They did not succeed, nor could they have hoped to, for whenever any real policy of the Left was discussed, such as a capital levy, or the refusal to impose indirect taxation, the moderate elements retired at once. On the other hand, if they endeavored

[2] See Appendix II, p. 116.

to restore confidence by passing a budget that would have protected the necessary income—in other words if they had had recourse to indirect taxation—their left wing would not have supported them, and they would have then been obliged to appeal to the Right, which from their point of view would have been absurd.

Thus on July 12, 1925, the dark day to which the Radical-Socialists still refer with indignation, Caillaux succeeded, it is true, in passing a bill taxing business turnover (the very essence of indirect taxation) by 295 votes to 228. But these 295 were made up of the Right and the Center and even a few members of the *Cartel,* while amongst the 228 figured the Communists, the Socialists, and all of the left wing of the Radical-Socialist group. It was simply the finest example of the spare majority referred to earlier.[3] But in the end even the government-minded moderates wearied of patching up the Cabinets abandoned by the Left, and would no longer respond to the desperate appeals of one Left government after another. The *Cartel* had made a complete hash of things, and small wonder that in July, 1926, the pound rose to 250 francs!

The obvious difficulty was that politically the *Cartel,* although it had refused, for doctrinal reasons, to take the necessary measures to save the franc, still had the confidence of the country. Each time the Left tried to solve the problem by their own methods and according to their own principles, they plunged deeper into the mire. On the other hand the Center and the Right, even with the most efficient financial program, could not have forced themselves upon a

[3] See Appendix II, p. 116.

country which politically did not want them. In commercial circles and in the salons, people were simply aghast, and every possible solution was suggested—a Fascist dictatorship, a Jacobean dictatorship, anti-Parliamentarism in all its forms, and even government of the country by a board made up of business men. All these solutions threatened the democracy, and therefore were out of the question. There seemed no way out, no matter where we turned. Then came Poincaré. . . .

III

The Poincaré Régime.

The genius of Poincaré lay in the fact that he understood, nay he felt that he must save the country without disowning the policy which the country had followed for fifty years and in which he still believed. In other words he had to bring back the value of the franc by means of restoring confidence, and this in fact by indirect taxation, but without denying in the least the principles of the Left. The National Union, which was obviously necessary under the circumstances, could not then be interpreted as a disavowal of the Left tendency which preceded it. He called Marin of the Right Center into the Cabinet, but he excluded Millerand; and when he, the man of the Ruhr, had chosen Briand, the man of Locarno, he also insisted on having as their colleague, Edouard Herriot, the leader of the *Cartel* who had recently been elected. These two names, Briand and Herriot, were essential pieces in his game, and when the second failed him two years later, in November, 1928, it meant the end of his effort, at least from a political point of view.

This program looked so contradictory that it seemed logically impossible to carry it out, and actually in the beginning we did not appreciate its deep wisdom. Its success depended on two exceptional circumstances. First, the imminence of the financial danger, and then the very personality of the new Prime Minister. It is hardly necessary to say anything about the critical financial situation of that time, beyond recalling the fact that the dollar stood at nearly 50 francs, and that politically the French never come to their senses till they are on the brink of ruin. And as for the personality of the Prime Minister, he was an epoch in himself and is now becoming a legend. He belongs to a race of statesmen whom we have hardly known since the day of the great founders of the Third Republic: he governs with a firm hand, is an incorruptible executive, and in finance a conservative. At the same time, although moderate, he is a man of the Left, belonging to the old mystical type of republican, and incapable, as we all know, of compromise with either clericalism or reaction. He seemed marvelously to embody all the qualifications required, so the business interests entrusted him with the moneybags, and the politicians consigned the Republic to his care.

The Chamber submitted to the new *régime,* although without immediately realizing its significance. It had been so frightened that it was docile and easily handled. The contrast was almost unbelievable between this now orderly Assembly and the passionate outbursts of its first days. As early as July 31, 1926, Poincaré wedged in a financial policy in which he completely abandoned the financial methods of the Left, and this was approved by 345 against 135, a

majority which he kept to the end of the term of the Chamber elected in 1924. The center of gravity of this majority was entirely different from the political equilibrium which prevailed at the time of the *Cartel des Gauches,* for the 345 votes comprised the Right, the Center, and half the Left, while the 135 represented the real inspiration of the now dead *Cartel,* such as the Socialists, and the extreme left wing of the Radical-Socialists.[4] The balance of power was thus in the Right, and therefore this national Cabinet resembled the earlier combinations also based on the Right whose main purpose had been to maintain order and whose real essence was conservative, with even a touch of reaction in them, but with such names as Poincaré, Briand, and Herriot, the reactionary venom that might have undermined the system was innocuous.

The country was entirely in sympathy with this new Government, and the republicans especially regarded the new *régime* as the very embodiment of their desires—a devotee of the Republic carrying out a successful financial policy, while the political portfolios in the Cabinet were held by the men of the Left and the economic portfolios by moderates. Don Quixote's purse was in charge of Sancho Panza. In time many deputies belonging to the old *Cartel* began to chafe at the length of the Ministry but they dared not vote against Poincaré, for their constituents would never have forgiven them. To tell the truth, the local political committees still moved in the same old channels, although the high tide of Poincaré's policy did cover everything with its high waters—so much so that at the elections of 1928 the quasi-una-

[4] See Appendix II, p. 116.

nimity of the candidates proclaimed them as Poincaré men and emphatically supported his financial policy which had brought back stability to the franc and prestige to France. In the new Chamber, taking them at their word, there should have been 440 Poincarists out of 607 new deputies. And yet it cannot be escaped that many of these 440 were eager to get back to the old party divisions as soon as the franc was out of danger—or they could in decency say it was. Politically this magnificent victory was to a certain extent an empty one.

Nothing could be more significant in this respect than the first days of the new Chamber. With its Left slightly diminished and its Right and Center slightly increased,[5] one naturally would have expected it simply to continue the policy of union that had just been approved by the people. Now several spontaneous incidents quickly and clearly disclosed the persistence of the old political structure which even the terrible scourge of war and inflation had not been able to efface: the Left tendency and the Right tendency were in process of being formed again, the lines of cleavage leaving on the Left part of the so-called *Gauche Radicale* and a group of the Center with Left leanings. Thanks to these, the Socialists were able to obtain the presidency of three parliamentary committees (among which was that on foreign affairs), the Radical-Socialists, six (among which was that on finance), the *Gauche Radicale,* four. Only seven presidencies remained for the other parties in an Assembly where the Radical-Socialists and the Socialists hardly had won more than one-third of the seats. The Government, it is true, was able to recon-

[5] See Appendix I, p. 115.

stitute a majority according to the tradition of the former Chamber and thus stabilize the franc with the approval of the quasi-unanimity of the House; it could even obtain a political vote of confidence of 451 members (among whom were 107 Radical-Socialists) on June 29, 1928,[6] and yet it was obvious that the Poincaré *régime* did not impose itself any longer without discussion. Left to themselves, four-fifths of the Radical-Socialists would have continued to support the Prime Minister until he had completed his financial task, for contact with power had taught them responsibility; but the zealots up and down the country, left to ruminate on their theories, persuaded themselves that all this "national" talk was simply a trap set by the reactionaries. At the annual meeting of the Radical-Socialists held at Angers, in November, 1928, M. Poincaré's Radical-Socialist colleagues were told by a vote to leave the Cabinet. This decision, dictated by the militants, which came as a surprise, did not in fact meet with the approval of the Radical-Socialist members of the House, nor of the Radical-Socialist Ministers themselves. But they had to submit to it. Although in financial matters his power was still to last, this marked the political end of the Poincaré *régime*.

The resignation of Herriot, although his presence in the Cabinet merely had the value of a symbol, upset the whole system, for without the support of the Radical-Socialists the national coalition, even if it changed neither its leader nor its program, was in fact becoming conservative in tendency. A similar cleavage had disfigured the *Union Sacrée* of the war, when it had become the *Bloc National*. A partisan of

[6] See Appendix II, p. 116.

the Left by sentiment as well as in theory, M. Poincaré fully realized the danger, but he was not free to deal with it at that moment, as he felt that the completion of his financial work should take precedence over everything else. Bolstered up by the Republican Socialists—a small group that is always glad to have its members in the Cabinet—his Ministry was no longer the same, for the center of gravity of his majority had altered. Henceforth he received the support of the 325 votes of the Center and the Right, but the 251 members of the Left—notably all the Radical-Socialists except a handful of dissenters—no longer gave him their confidence.[7] It was once more the old story of a majority having to depend on the Right instead of the clever *régime* which, since 1926, had at least kept the fiction of a complete agreement with the Left. In fact since then we have again seen repeated that old and essential line of cleavage which separates the Center and the Left: for several times during the long and passionate discussion which took place in the spring of 1929 on the missionary congregations, the advanced wing of the moderate group of the *Gauche Radicale* voted with the opposition against the Government.[8]

From this we can clearly trace the normal evolution of any government depending on the Right, for it always ends by losing any support it has from the Left. It is a state of affairs something like an atmosphere, a certain political temperament which no statesman whatever has the power to avert. M. Poincaré is a man who cannot bring himself to compromise with any party that differs from him in political

[7] See Appendix II, p. 117.
[8] See Appendix II, p. 117.

ideas. If his financial program has been achieved without the help of the Left, which he obviously would have preferred, it is because he thought that the public safety demanded it.

There lies the explanation of the paradoxical composition of the majority which has approved of the Mellon-Bérenger treaty, and in general of the ratification by France of the inter-allied debts. Left to their own inclination the parties would have divided on the following lines: the Left, by a strong desire for peaceful solutions and equally complete liquidation of war, would have been tempted to vote the ratifications with the implication that a policy of international *entente* would follow, and such was in fact the program of the Poincaré Cabinet; at the time the center and the Right were obviously tempted to resist such a policy, at least to a certain extent, because it was somewhat in contradiction with the attitude of national firmness and exclusiveness which several of its leaders had even defended. Since the ministry of M. Poincaré as reconstituted in November, 1928, depended on the Right for its financial and general policy, it was difficult for the Left to support it politically, just as it appeared difficult for the Right to support it in its ratification policy. This led to a paradoxical situation in which the policy of the Government was in fact approved by its adversaries and disapproved by its friends. One can well understand the parliamentary confusion which arose out of that. In the end the ratification of the inter-allied debts was voted (not without many dissenting votes) by the Center and the Right, because they were the usual majority of the Government, and also because as we have already said, there is a greater

sense of duty toward a government in that part of the Chamber, but the Left voted against ratification mostly because the ratification was proposed by its adversaries and also because it found there a good excuse not to associate itself by a formal vote with a very unpopular measure. The Mellon-Bérenger treaty was voted on July 21, 1929, by the House by a majority of 300 against 292 votes; the majority comprising the usual supporters of the Cabinet less about 30 or 40 of them, and the minority being composed of the usual Radical-Socialists, Socialists, and Communists, opponents of the Cabinet, plus a few members of the Right Center, who to the end asserted their disapproval of the policy of ratification which they always had opposed. If the Poincaré Cabinet did not survive after this, it was less for a political reason than because M. Poincaré's health did not stand the excessive strain which that memorable debate had imposed on him. A whole cycle of French history then is closed and a new one is beginning, which I should need to be a prophet to describe.[9]

IV

Commentary.

In France the interests, when they have any common sense, would rather have, according to Napoleon's advice, financial matters dealt with financially, and political matters politically. This is perhaps a distinctly conservative viewpoint, distinguishing the true conservatives from the Left people, for if we actually take and acknowledge the interests as they are, we give up as hopeless any attempt to change the bal-

[9] See Appendix II, p. 117.

ance of the social structure. The Left was within an ace of losing the franc entirely, because they insisted on trying to solve a monetary problem politically, but M. Poincaré was able to right the situation again because he handled finance, not as a social reformer, but as a financier.

The Poincaré experiment, as we call it, has in fact its place in the normal cycles of our political history. Poincaré was too wise to say so, but from the beginning it really was the Center and the Right who settled the muddle made by the Left. To keep silent about this was a stroke of genius on the part of the great leader, and the country was long deceived by such a fiction. In fact it would have continued indefinitely to be willingly deceived, had the politicians not become impatient when they realized that he saved the franc without carrying out their own policy. Deprived of its balance on the Left, the system was bound to lean to the Right, a fact which was sure to arouse sooner or later some coalition of the Left with a program of democratic defense.

We seem to spend our time defending ourselves against perils! We line ourselves up against the peril of the Left, and when we have done with that, forgetting the nature of the former danger, we concentrate on the Left against a peril of the Right. No doubt this will go on forever and ever, amen.

CHAPTER V

THE PARTIES AND GROUPS IN THE FRENCH CHAMBER

Now that we have studied the balance of the parties, we must consider what the different shades of opinion are. We need not expect much help from the parties themselves, for except those on the Left, few are worthy of the name, and even these are so badly organized that none of them would be able to support a candidate with sufficient efficiency to get him elected to the Chamber. The parliamentary groups reflect all the fine shades of opinion, although sometimes they are distorted by personal ambitions (certain groups would lead easier to Cabinet ranks, and others to chairmanships in committees). In the end one is attracted back to the fixed axes of general tendencies which exist outside the parties or groups and of which they are the interpretation. These general tendencies filter through, by influencing deputies when they vote. It is a subtle game, which gives a diversity to our public life that is lacking under the ponderous discipline of the English parties.

In order to obtain a general chart, let us tabulate the groups of the present Chamber (I mean the Chamber elected in 1928) in their three main sections: Left, Center, and Right. This classification is arbitrary, I admit, and will probably be out of date as soon as it is printed, but the only method seems to be to seize the phenomena at a given moment of time.

I

The Left.

The Left is made up of the Radical-Socialists, the Socialists, and the various groups of so-called Republican Socialists, but it is hard to say yet whether the Communists should be included.

The Radical-Socialist party (with 122 deputies,[1] and 1,655,000 votes in 1928, or 17 per cent of the electorate) expresses the very essence of the Left and perhaps is the most typically French of them all. It attracts the lower middle classes of the country and the towns—not the millionaires nor the proletariat—and in a general way it represents the individualistic tradition of France; but from the American standpoint it could appear as the most old-fashioned of the country. Its program consists of an instinctive defense of the "small" against the "big," indulgence for those who decline to be disciplined—unless they happen to be already organized against discipline—and support of the state in opposition to the church, and of the people against capitalistic domination.

"The whole economic program of radicalism," writes Thibaudet, "consists in magnifying under a mystical aureole a single attribute, and that the attribute 'small.' . . ."[2] Once this principle is accepted this half *bourgeois* extremist takes more interest in tactics than in reforms, for after all why would he be eager to change a society whose evolution would only tend to eliminate him? From the point of view

[1] Groups as registered in May, 1929.

[2] Albert Thibaudet, *La république des professeurs,* p. 259.

of the future he probably is the most authentic conservative.

Radicalism keeps scurrying about between two attractions—with regard to customs it is conservative, but its political theory forbids it to have any enemy on the Left. This mystical, immutable attraction toward the Left is the essence of its existence, and without it nothing remains but a few pale dregs. The Radicals feel this instinctively when they refuse to join the moderates against revolution, and now we find them going to the length of voting on the second ballot not only for the Socialists but even for the Communists! As Waldeck-Rousseau once said, "Radicalism always expresses itself by the process of comparison." It is a childish game, but unavoidable, and in the end it often means that the party is attracted to a center of gravity outside its own boundaries. To many militant Radicals, union with the Socialists is the first consideration, and therefore they are members of the *Cartel des Gauches* first and Radicals only afterward. Recently at the time of a famous election at Narbonne the Radical-Socialist leaders in Paris did not attempt to hide their feelings for the Socialist leader, Léon Blum, even in preference to the candidate fighting under their own party flag. . . . But Léon Blum was, of course, "more to the Left"!

The Socialists, or more exactly the United Socialists (with 101 deputies, and 1,698,000 votes or 18 per cent of the electorate) cling obstinately to their revolutionary and Marxian traditions and vocabulary. According to their own tale, they will have nothing to do with the republic of the *bourgeoisie,* and even refuse to vote for the budget. On the Left they lose their members to the Communists who are—or say

they are—revolutionaries for good and all, while on the Right they are invaded by a type of radical property owners who must go one better at all costs. This explains why socialism, after having been the official party of the revolution, has degenerated since the appearance of the Soviets into a party of second-hand revolution, or a sort of right wing of Communism. Even the right wing of the Socialists is now drifting into a kind of super-radicalism, and in the same sense that the Radical-Socialists themselves are only the right wing of socialism. Thus in our politics we build up such awe-inspiring titles at the very moment that the parties themselves are becoming less terrifying!

This evolution is clearly shown on the electoral chart of the United Socialist party. The party is at its best in the great industrial regions of the North, the Center, and Lyons, where its membership is made up of skilled workmen and devoted members of the trade unions. But in the south its domain has spread over agricultural districts where there are no manufactures whatever, and there its recruits are taken from among the small democratic peasant proprietors. The Valley of the Rhone, Provence, and part of Mediterranean Languedoc, are now the principal territory of French socialism—a statement that seems paradoxical to anyone who knows this country of buoyant political boasting people yet perfectly satisfied for the present. Thirty years ago the radical leaders in Paris when deserted by their electorate in favor of socialism, then at its beginnings, had taken refuge in the south. It may be significant that today the Socialist Renaudel is taking refuge at Toulon, and the Socialist Léon Blum at Narbonne.

My own impressions of a recent trip to the "red" department of the Var was interesting in this connection. Visiting some violent Radical-Socialists, I was afraid that my republicanism would seem very tame to them, until I realized that I was quite as advanced as they were. My host told me sadly that there were hardly any Radicals left in the department. It was only later, when I called on some Socialists, that I appreciated the significance of this: the Socialist membership consisted chiefly of former Radicals who had quite simply changed their label. This Socialist leader was quite frank with me as we chatted and enjoyed a magnificent view of the blue Mediterranean and pine woods lying in the sun: "Nominally I am a Socialist, of course," he said, "but in reality I am a Republican and always have been. However, one must keep up with the times."

I must have seemed as ponderous and obtuse as any other northerner when I objected: "You are all landowners in this district, and judging from what I see before me, you are all well to do. How, then, can you vote for a party which condemns private ownership?" With a graceful gesture my friend replied vaguely: "We are working for the future." Then, fool that I am, I realized that although one votes for this program, it is perfectly understood that it will not be put into practice.

And yet logically they were at fault and by rights they should have been Communists, but when I asked if there were any Communists in the district, the reply was: "Only a few; fortunately in this department we have some common sense." Several large districts of the Var, however, have been contaminated, one especially where Moscow had distributed

hundreds of membership cards of the Third International. As everywhere else in that region, this Commune was populated with small landowners, all in comfortable circumstances. As nothing can hinder it, it is easy to predict that in a few years' time, the Var will be entirely Communist; at any rate, M. Berton, a noted Communist, has already been elected general councilor of St. Tropez.

But this recalls the well-known phrase, "*Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit.*" The south has been conquered, but it is beginning to tame its savage conqueror. Theoretically, the Socialist party is still the organ of a protest in favor of revolution, although it is simply now to a large extent a democratic party and very parliamentary, judging by its deputies whose right wing in the Chamber is the heart of anti-clericalism—which certainly has nothing to do with Karl Marx.

Commenting on the election of M. Léon Blum at Narbonne on May 6, 1929, the radical newspaper, the *Dépêche de Toulouse,* summed up the event as follows: "The socialism of the electors does not always correspond with the socialism of those whom they elect. In their Socialist party ticket these electors simply mean to express a republicanism that is a little redder, while their socialism is still the old type of French socialism. This French socialism is our socialism, it belongs to us Radicals. Class war and suspension of legality are both Teuton conceptions, and so is the basic collectivism which Jaurès himself could never completely swallow. Amongst these electors of Narbonne maybe M. Blum would not have been able to find a hundred electors willing to vote for a Marxism of which they know absolutely noth-

ing." One could have an interesting game of patience to try to sort out the Radical-Socialists and the true collectivists in the Socialist party.

The "Republican Socialists," the "French Socialists," and the "Independents of the Left" (with all together 47 deputies and 492,000 votes or 5 per cent of the electorate) have no real existence in the country, and only represent the attitude of individual members. When an elector "advances" he passes from radicalism to socialism; but when he is elected, the "advanced" deputy often goes in the opposite direction, for when he comes in contact with power he realizes the conditions of government. Certain attitudes, such as non-participation in government on which the Socialists generally insist, seem childish to a man of any standing who naturally feels that it is his duty to become a Minister. If he turns aside from official socialism, he is not likely to join the Radical-Socialists, for these, being irresistibly attracted to the Left, will be critical of any defection to the Right. Certain groups, however, which seem to have been especially created for this case, are ready to pave his way to the ministerial benches. After all, it does not really matter whether there are 18 Republican Socialists, or 12 members of the Republican Socialist party and French Socialists, or 16 Independents of the Left. The interesting point is that this section of the Chamber produces a record number of Cabinet ministers per square yard.

The question now is whether to classify as part of the Left the heterogeneous ranks of the Communist party (with 13 deputies and 1,064,000 votes or 11 per cent of the electorate). Within the "red circles" around Paris, the citadel of Communism, there are

a number of *bona fide* revolutionaries bearing the imprint of Moscow, but the party's real following consists also of the irreconcilable and discontented citizens—people who have been expelled from their homes by grasping proprietors, embittered ex-service men, and suburban proprietors in a bad plight—who all vote Communist. They are really the same people as those who voted, after 1871, in protest for Henri Rochefort, who was in prison and therefore ineligible. Today the same kind of protest is in aid of the revolutionary propaganda systematically organized by a foreign power. In industrial circles Communism consolidates the advanced working class elements, the men who twenty years ago would have been Socialists. In the country districts it attracts in increasing numbers not only the agricultural workers, but many small landowners who are discontented with their lot. Their complaint is as old as the hills, the unfair division of wealth that alarmed the generation of 1848. But in the south, to tell the truth, the Communist is often only the reddest of the republicans. All this conglomeration goes to make up a party to which Moscow can apply the whip, but not a party of the Left, for the Communists laugh at the republican discipline which instinctively all democratic politicians respect. The Communists are like a group of Irishmen who have not yet found their Parnell!

From these permutations and combinations we can see that the Left is a tendency rather than a party, a permanent tendency that always dominates the same regions: the south (excluding the Gironde, the Basque country, and the Cevennes); the central plateau of the southwest, which formerly was the

territory of the Bonapartists; the Parisian basin, but not Paris itself or the department of Seine-et-Oise; the east, except Lorraine; the Brittany of the Bretons, as contrasted with Gallic Brittany where they speak French. In general the Left claims the Center and the South; of the 32 departments which gave more than half their votes to the *Cartel des Gauches* in 1924, 28 are south of the Loire.

Let us now add up the strength of all these groups —except the Communists—as they are working in the same direction. M. Georges Lachapelle, whose figures are always reliable, gives the Left 3,845,000 votes out of the total of 9,351,000, or about 40 per cent.[3] However, this does not give them a majority, so by itself the Left—to wit the *Cartel*—is powerless. But there is more yet to come, for the Left has such a mystical hold upon the people that its real power is out of proportion to the political effectives which it musters in cold figures. Whether it is in office or not, it enjoys the lion's share.

II

The Center.

The *raison d'être* of the Center is its ability to govern; one might almost say its real essence is to maintain order in line with the republican tradition. Unfortunately its forces are not organized, and in spite of their importance, such would-be party organizations as the *Alliance Républicaine,* or the *Fédération Républicaine* are not parties strictly speak-

[3] Georges Lachapelle, *Les élections législatives, avril 22–29, 1928.*

ing. The candidate and the moderate deputy are thus left entirely to their own resources. Today the Center is no longer a point of concentration, but rather a watershed dividing two slopes, the one on the Left being radical in its anticlericalism and republican discipline, the other to the Right attracted by Catholicism and the ruling classes.

Under the heading of "Cults," the *Guide of the Candidate* gives some priceless definitions of these various shades of opinion: "Left of the center: *liberty for all but watch the priests!* Right of the center: *liberty for all but special privileges for those in charge of our morals!*"

Between these two slopes the ridge is so sharp that one is almost bound to fall one side or the other—that is always the trouble with the Center, in fact with our politics all through.

The four groups of the Center, with their 162 deputies, form an important body in the Chamber of 1928. The members of the *Gauche Radicale* (with 52 deputies) are not only the most advanced in the Center but are also of first importance, for their complex psychology—really quite simple—is the mainspring of our whole political system. Although socially conservative, they will not break with the Left, with whom they vote on political questions, but they join the Right when questions of material interests are at stake. If the issue is in doubt, or if it is a vote of confidence, some twelve to fifteen members will cross over to the Radical-Socialists but the rest are faithful to the Center. This division exactly indicates the two political slopes of the legislature.[4] If the

[4] See Appendix II, p. 116, vote of March 14, 1929, on the authorization of the missionary congregations.

Gauche Radicale only had 200 members, the country would be easy to govern, for neither its political preferences would be opposed nor its economic security threatened.

The *Gauche Unioniste et Sociale* (with 17 deputies) mainly contains the Radical-Socialists who preferred Poincaré to the *Cartel,* a serious defection which the Left will never forgive. The *Action Démocratique et Sociale* (with 29 deputies) attracts the men who, I think, best understand the science of government. Unfortunately, politics being a passion with us, this center of the Center has never carried much weight, although it includes some of our most distinguished personalities.

Finally we come to the fourth group, the *Républicains de Gauche* (with 64 deputies). Their name hardly expresses them—in fact, the reverse would have been better—but there is nothing extraordinary in this, when one considers the devious ways of our political vocabulary! This party is composed of republicans of very moderate views, some of whom are true to the old republican principles. They are being joined in increasing numbers by men of reactionary origin elected by majorities based on the Right, but who, feeling attracted as everybody is by the call of the Left, tried to go as far as possible toward the Center.

We perceive that all of these groups have something in common; but they have grave reasons for divergence. The left wing of the *Gauche Radicale* really belongs to the Radical-Socialists, while the right wing of the *Républicains de Gauche* still belongs to the atmosphere of the Right. If only they could be united and disciplined, these 162 deputies of

the Center, representing 2,145,000 votes, as much as 22 per cent of the electorate, could dominate the Chamber. They have never been able to form a unanimous and united group because, even though the Center is something of importance in the Chamber and in the country, it never carries much weight in the individual constituencies. If we go to the very point in any local election, we find that the members are generally only elected thanks to the balance vote of the extreme Left or the extreme Right, a balance vote which is the very condition of their success. There lies a factor which naturally will influence their political attitude in the Chamber. And you must understand that this factor is an essential one, for it forces the *Fédération Républicaine* to the Right, and permits the *Alliance Démocratique* to enjoy many of the attractions of the Left. It also explains why the conjunction of the Center exists only in theory.

III

The Right.

As a national party the Right is not much better organized than the Center. But although as a party it hardly exists, its importance is first rate, if we consider it as a political magnet. In our public life the Right is a force which counterbalances the Left, and possibly has as great an influence. Actually there is not a single Commune, no matter how small, without its opposition group organized by the church, and wherever there is a château, an old *bourgeois* family, or any equivalent of an aristocracy, this opposition finds support. In the early days of the Republic we

had some *bourgeois* belonging to the Left, and now we have Catholic Democrats; but the former are now only a memory, and the latter a tentative effort. While the Right has long been reinforced by a *bourgeois* following, it has not yet been weakened by a Catholic dissent. When we examine these Right forces which everywhere carry great weight, we can distinguish three different aspects, which correspond roughly to three different groups in the Chamber.

The *Union Républicaine Démocratique* (with 133 deputies) might not care to be classed with the Right. In the wider organization of the *Fédération Républicaine* they rub shoulders with men of the Center and in some ways they might lay claim to the great moderate republicans of the last generation. Two tenets shift their center of gravity to the Right; in religious matters the spirit of the traditional resistance of the state to the church is not genuine with them, and socially they are attracted by an order expressing itself in a hierarchy. This is really a party of social defense in which the great captain of industry mingles with the *bourgeois* Catholic, but in which the bewildered republican can find no trace of the true republican tradition: there persists in that group a reminiscence of the National Assembly of 1871 and of the Septennat of MacMahon.

The group of the Independents (with 44 deputies) is interesting chiefly because it contains besides some real independents, the last of the Royalists or at least of the anti-republicans. These are the old feudal nobles of the west who remain in their local strongholds from which they look out with disdain on the flood of democracy that has submerged everything in sight. If the *chevau-léger* still exists in France,

it is here. This nobility is as completely distinct from the *bourgeois* of the *Union Républicaine Démocratique* as the reactionaries are distinct from the conservatives.

Let us close our survey with the *Démocrates Populaires* (with 18 deputies). It is hard to say whether this party should be classed with the rest of the Right for—although they are avowed Catholics—being impressed by the encouragement received from Rome and still true after twenty years to the teaching of Marc Sangnier, they claim to work for democracy. In other countries there is a possibility that the church and the Left may eventually come to an agreement: in Germany, for example, the *Centrum* is not necessarily bound over to a policy of social conservatism. In France up to the present it is the attitude toward the church that really determines the boundary line of the Republic. Is it possible to break with this old tradition and wipe out the old controversy that keeps coming regularly to the fore? It possibly is in certain outlying provinces such as Brittany where the nobleman and the priest often are in opposition to each other, in Alsace where the *Centrum* has left a strong mark, and even in Flanders and the Basque country. One understands at any rate that many Catholics feel tired of being confounded with parties whose day is over and finished: the church, they say, is democratic by the composition of its members. However, the leaders of the Republic in the country have still to be convinced that Rome will prefer democracy to authority. If the *Démocrates Populaires* are to succeed, we must wipe out everything done by either the church or the state in the past one hundred years. This may or may not be

possible, but we must admit that it is a daring conception.

Let us mark on our map the two fortresses in which the Right seems to be solidly entrenched: first, the inland districts of the west—the Vendée, Maine and Anjou, Lower Normandy, and French Brittany—a country of groves and with a distinct geological personality where a remnant of the feudal spirit still lingers; and secondly, the Cévennes, where wolves may still be seen prowling around, where the priest rules the parish, and where traces of the fanaticism of the wars of religion are still to be found. In a very different sense we might add as strength of the Right the three departments which represented Lorraine before the War, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Vosges, and the Meuse. This is a republican Catholic and patriotic province, where the proximity of the frontier and the ever present thought of war keep alive old memories.

But the domains of the Right cannot in fact be geographically limited, because we find it at every turn. Wherever there is a priest, we feel this influence in favor of the Right tendency, and it is not surprising that the Right may even be able to claim as late as 1928 so large a proportion of the country: 2,160,000 votes or 23 per cent of the electorate. In our political history the part played by the Right is essentially less in its practical achievements than in the reactions of which it is the cause. All the same the deputy of the Right is treated like a political leper. You make use of his votes and then desert him for the Left in order to court a Radical-Socialist who laughs in your face! The Right never seems to realize that its

influence is compromising and that it would do much better to give its help in silence.

IV

The Inspiration of French Politics.

Let us now turn back to the tabulation of the parties in the Chamber after the elections of 1928:

On the voting list	11,250,000
Actually voted	9,351,000
Percentage of total list	83%

	Votes	*Proportion of votes*
Left	3,385,000	40%
Center	2,145,000	22%
Right	2,160,000	23%
Communists	1,064,000	11%
Etc.	597,000	4%

The seats in the Chamber were alloted as follows:

	Deputies	*Proportion of total*
Left	270	44.2%
Center	162	26.5%
Right	165	27.0%
Communists	13	2.1%
Etc.	3	.2%

According to this nearly every party is a little overrepresented with the exception of the Communists who, while being arithmetically entitled to 66 seats, have only one-fifth of that number. Other-

wise the number of votes polled corresponds well enough to the number of members elected.

From this table we gather that for the sake of government a coalition is a necessity. The most numerous party, the Left, is unable to do anything alone with its strength of 40 per cent of the House. It looks as if the Right and Center together would be irresistible; and as a matter of fact, when they do unite, they are so powerful that they can veto anything they wish. But party totals are not necessarily decisive in French politics, for the real strength of various parties is to be reckoned at times on the basis of a varying coefficient. Theoretically a vote of the Right is as good as a vote of the Left, but in practice this is not so. The member of the Left enjoys special privileges owing to the prestige of his party, for even if he belongs to a minority it will happen that his opinion still will carry as much weight as if he owned special voting shares. The reason for this is that the Republic instinctively refuses to allow the nation to be governed by men who are not at bottom inspired by its spirit. The country must carry on, however, so when its security is threatened, even the republicans may be forced to sacrifice their preferences.

In conclusion, politically France is inspired by the Left but the "interests" are always standing by, ready to apply the brakes. They are good brakes, too, and if the nation were an automobile they would certainly be indicated by a little red sign STOP at the back to show how powerful they are. In Germany the brakes are not so good, nor are they in England.

In practice the general policy of the country is dictated by certain regions, although some others

are not willing to subscribe to it. The Republic, as we know it, was created by the idealism of Paris, the influential people of the east, and by the obstreperous folk of the south. In the beginning the center and the west did not take much interest, and I think that at heart the west is still hostile.

A curious fact, little realized by foreigners, is the decadence of Paris politically, after having been the practical inspiration of all the revolutions of the nineteenth century. Paris has developed in every way, but in politics she seems to have lost ground. After 1871 the serious republicans of the province reached a point where they became impatient of such foolishness as the Commune and Boulangism. One might also say that since 1889, when this same Boulangism nearly dragged the rest of the country into a terrible adventure, the capital has had no influence whatever on the general policy of the country.

Yet a community of four or five million inhabitants (including the Seine-et-Oise which is becoming more and more incorporated with the metropolis) does not go on indefinitely without making itself felt. It may be that the capital will again take its place after being eclipsed for decades, but it is not likely to be this time in the realm of ideals. This immense conglomeration of interests, of protests, virtualities, reactions, sentimental and material, could easily give birth to a policy inspired by the "interests of the region." Paris could defend her interests as the north defends its sugar, the south its wine, and Marseilles and Havre their shipping. The accredited representatives would certainly then have little in common with the idealists of the past generation, when we had journalists, intellectuals, apostles, even poets

like Victor Hugo. Today, should this come about, we would have commercial lawyers speaking the language of everyday life. It would be the politics of the interests with a bright red Communist lining. . . . But it is to be hoped that France will never come to that.

Meanwhile the country seems to come mainly under the influence of three different regions; first the south with its eloquence; secondly, the east with its sound reasoning; and thirdly, the center—yesterday Bonapartist and today Radical—with its thrifty mountaineers for whom we have already expressed our admiration. What a curious crew with its mysticism tied up in its famous old stocking—in a word, France.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION—FRENCH AND ANGLO-SAXON DEMOCRACY

I

French Conceptions of Government, Past and Present.

Sometimes the French appear to have left the past behind them, and superficially this may be so. Yet the past does survive. Our earlier *régimes* still influence our present conceptions of government, for in analyzing them we must necessarily turn back to the past. This hold that history still has over us is disturbing. Seeming to ignore the recent evolution of the world, we live on our old foundations of politics, principles, and sentiments which we no longer try to bring up to date. We may still adapt ourselves,—and in fact do it eagerly—but the leadership in the creation of new political doctrines has deserted us for other nations.

An essential cleavage in French political opinion gives us two schools of thought, the one favoring autocratic government, and the other the rule of the people. The latter group is itself subdivided into three branches, the parliamentarians, the Bonapartists, and the advocates of committee government; each of different temperament and each representing a certain phase of our development. Lamartine somewhere speaks of the "soul in which nothing dies." So it is with France, where nothing dies, and the

adaptation of these tendencies, especially the deep imprint of the dominating ones, finally has come to constitute a distinct *régime* which cannot be compared with that of other countries because it is so distinctly and exclusively French.

The aristocrat has no confidence in the good sense of the masses, and therefore does not consider the people as a responsible source of government. He believes that authority should come from elsewhere, partly from God—a conception now out of date—and partly from the ruling classes and the technical assistants, the only human beings whom he recognizes as competent—a conception that fits not so badly with the modern state of affairs. "Your people, sir," said Hamilton to Jefferson, "your people is a great beast!" and thousands of people in France would agree with him—all the feudal nobility and the increasing number of the *bourgeoisie,* including the believers in the divine right of the employer of which industry in the beginning knew very little. As for the church, in practice she could easily be democratic, but in spirit she is bound to be autocratic. I do not believe that autocracy belongs entirely to the past, although the *régime* which it last inspired was that of May 16, 1877.

The other conceptions of government are all connected with the rule of the people, but they are interpreted so differently that it is sometimes hard to recognize them.

The parliamentary conception—or at least the French adaptation of it—takes the form of elected assemblies, which have instructions to watch for any sign of autocratic rule. This is the very Radical doctrine to which Alain refers when he accuses all gov-

ernments of being essentially reactionary and warns the deputies to be on their guard. This ingrained hatred of authority is a striking survival of the autocratic governments of the past. As we have already suggested, herein lies the innate vice of the Third Republic, which is a perfect example of this type of parliamentary democracy. It must be admitted, however, that no *régime* ever responded more closely to the majority.

Apart from the Communists, certain syndicalists and believers in plebiscites, it is this parliamentary conception of government that attracts most active republicans, including, we may be sure, the greater number of the Socialists, who seem to become more republican and parliamentary, and less revolutionary every day. If the *bourgeois* has deserted that type of government which seems to play the part of the accused (even when one asks from him personal favors), the people on the contrary prefer it. If they no longer speak of direct democracy, it is because they have it in the intervention of their deputy, who must keep as directly and constantly in touch with them as possible. In no other country is the member of Parliament called upon to the same extent to deal, in the manner of a tribune, with personal claims. To tell the truth, the French term "parliamentarian" is misleading, for it does not correspond in the slightest with the British M.P.

Bonapartism, which is also based on universal suffrage, is interesting in that it aims at establishing an autocratic government within the framework of the democracy. According to this vigorous conception, we should have a national ruler chosen by a popular plebiscite, who would curb anarchy and si-

lence the chatterboxes in parliament. Equality would still exist, but order would prove more excellent than liberty, while the material conquests of 1789 would be guaranteed against not only a return of the *ancien régime* but also against any threat of social revolution. Call the ruler what you will—emperor, consul, or president—it matters little, so long as he is not a king but a tribune, and there is always a platform to consolidate the democracy under the sign of the social order.

It was Napoleon the Great who, first as Consul and then as Emperor, conceived this whole system, but Napoleon III in his turn applied its principles and methods with equal vigor. Bonapartism certainly did not end on September 4, 1870, for a distinct Bonapartist temperament exists today. Democracy has never obliterated it, and it still inspires a marked political trend, by which it is always possible to distinguish it. Let us consider as different forms of this latent Bonapartism not only Boulangism, and the nationalism disclosed in the Dreyfus Case, but the various forms of antiparliamentarism including the most recent, and even certain aspects of the *Action Française* whose royalist tradition so-called scarcely hides its longing for a Caesarean government. M. Emmanuel Berl rightly says: "Maurras [the leader of the *Action Française*] gives shape to the idealism of the Republic. The monarchy puts feudalism in order. But it is not a sufficient reason if you are anti-republican, to believe that you may call yourselves monarchists."[1]

M. René Gillouin also recalls that M. Maurras' first action even before turning to the Catholics, was

[1] Emmanuel Berl, *Mort de la pensée bourgeoise,* p. 133.

to look to the Radicals.[2] From this we must conclude that if the Parliamentary or Radical Republic is suspicious of authority, the Bonapartist conception on the contrary means a republic linked with authority. From this point of view Bonapartism continues as a latent tendency even outside of any political system. From time to time, it comes to the surface, and its expressions even remind one of the eruptions of a volcano.

Finally we must consider the third conception, government by committees, which makes its chief appeal to the advanced politicians, although they may have accepted parliamentary government. According to this school of thought, the spirit of democracy is at its best in small groups of well-tried supporters who provide the ferment for the whole body. They are the salt of the Republic as the early Christians were the salt of the earth. They have been entrusted with the message, charged to teach it, carry it out, and defend it at all costs. The leaders even feel wholly justified in using arbitrary methods as the ultimate safeguard of the *régime* against the ignorance of the half-hearted and the machinations of its enemies. The whole system is steeped in an atmosphere of safeguard, suspicion, and ostracism, and any small committee meeting may find itself busy expelling a member—but everything is done in the name of the law.

In France we have very few revolutionaries of the violent type who defy the law. In this description of the modern committee system we can easily recognize the Jacobin dictatorship of 1793, and also its washed-out copy by the Commune of Paris in 1871. To the same tradition also belongs *Combism* (Combes was

[2] René Gillouin, *Trois crises*, p. 171.

a Radical Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905) with its *régime* of suspicion, of delegates, and intimidation carried out by the committees. Today the Radical-Socialist *"Comitards"* (local bosses) seem to be tending in the same direction, for their rule may be compared, according to M. Thibaudet, to a multi-Caesarism of the electoral committees. When it has obtained a certain degree of purity, the democratic doctrine in the opinion of these apostles cannot be safely entrusted to the masses. It must be first given to priests—an ugly word in a democracy like ours but quite accurate—who alone are capable to supervise its distribution. As a rule it is these apostles of revolution who discover their own call to this work, but it often happens that as they remain hidden away in the holy of holies, the public hardly knows about them. Although their attitude toward the law is entirely different, the "kernel" of the Communist party, and the "committee" of the Radical-Socialists both belong, in a sense, to the democracy of committees, in contrast to the Center and the Right, where there is little feeling for this form of government. In France, democracy is a religion, and like all religions, it is liable to develop into a sect.

One longs to escape from the inveterate persistence of these political considerations, but it is not possible, though the country is constantly creating new forms of thought and production, for its creative genius is unquenchable. It is only in politics that the spirit of the French *régime* does not change, for the hold that tradition in this line has over us is positively terrifying.

II

The Spirit of the Present Régime.

The Third Republic is characterized by three persistent tendencies, and three reactions arising in opposition to them.

Popular government, the first of these tendencies, must be considered irrevocable; and the second running parallel to it is a tendency to despotism, a virus inherited from the past which still exists in both our administration and our government. "Power is always regal," says Alain, and it must be admitted that such is the experience of the French in the past. The third tendency, the Bonapartist spirit, is a longing for autocratic power in a *régime* that has systematically tried to root it out. This latent anti-parliamentarism seems paradoxical in a country which just wants parliamentarism to be everything.

The three reactions arising out of these tendencies are not less vigorous. The people wish to be everything, or at least assure their own rule, therefore their elected, the deputy, must be the most important piece in the game; hence the supremacy of the deputy, the creature of universal suffrage. Since in the nature of things, governments invariably abuse their power, they must be rigidly kept in check. The deputy chosen to be a Cabinet Minister and placed in that capacity at the head of an administration is really instructed by the people to control it quite as much as direct it. Parliament is still mindful of the two Napoleons, and also of General Boulanger who more recently insisted on addressing the people over its head, and therefore its sure instinct tells the parliament that it is prudent to be jealous of anybody endeavor-

ing to come in touch with the masses outside of it. The French Parliament, even in its most advanced elements, detests and condemns any form of direct government by the people.

It is not surprising that such preoccupations have formed an entirely new conception of the parliamentary *régime* in comparison with the original English model. The men originally elected to watch and inspect the working of the system have become the true inspirers of their Government in the democracy, and democracy in its turn has come to insist that no resistance whatever should be opposed to its delegates so that the balance of power remains in fact nothing more than a theory. It is hard to understand how an English observer as penetrating as Mr. Bodley could have ever believed that the French people were not seriously devoted to democracy.

The deputy is in reality the central figure of the *régime,* for his power lies in the fact that he alone in the Republic is directly responsible to the people, and holds a direct delegation of the sovereign masses. Now with the constituency system, which is the truly French way of voting, the member of Parliament really owes nothing to his party, for as it did not create him it cannot depose him. Nor need he worry about the Government, for although the latter has the right constitutionally, it would never dream of dissolving the Chamber; it would constitute a scandal, almost a *coup d'état!* He then will hardly ever refrain from defeating the Cabinet, a gesture which in England would automatically carry you before the electors (with a cost of £1,000 sterling) but which in France does not cost the deputy a cent and is even likely to open the agreeable prospect of a portfolio.

Could any two situations be more diametrically opposed? This explains why a deputy who is sure of his constituency feels independent of everyone except his electors. The opponents of universal suffrage consider this a lamentable situation, but the constituency does not view things from such an angle at all. From this point of view we should not be astonished to read Alain writing of the deputy with love and admiration and describing him as the "idealist of the provinces, a redoubtable personality, not to be turned aside by promises or threats, for he is entrenched in his constituency, fortified and invincible as a feudal nobleman in his castle."[3]

Thus the political system rests on a local foundation, in fact on a polyarchy of constituencies, where the deputy is absolutely at his best if he happens to be personally a local man, in which case he becomes the plenipotentiary of the districts to Paris. We have already noted the suspicious attitude of the republican provinces toward the capital. The man they have elected must not become a Parisian, but should on the contrary always remain a provincial endowed with a mission. If he does become a Parisian—as usually happens if he is successful—he runs the risk of getting out of touch with his constituents. If he is corrupted by the salons, by business, or by power, he will cease to share the political faith or convictions of his electors. Such skepticism is incompatible with the deep-rooted and somewhat heavy-footed provincial convictions. Alain will tell you that he prefers for his deputy an honest man who has not been too successful, a man who just arrives from his village all ready to teach the Parisians. Everywhere we find

[3] Alain, *Éléments d'une doctrine radicale,* p. 42.

this democratic phobia of being betrayed, the snobbishness being the first step to treachery . . . How well I understand the labor leader's hesitation to appear in a dinner jacket! The average French deputy goes to his constituency every Friday night and only returns to Paris on Tuesday or Wednesday. The post brings him fifty letters a day and he answers them all. He generally lodges in a modest room somewhere in the capital or the suburbs, and his electors prefer that he live this "simple life."

His mandate to the Chamber is thus less as a lawmaker than as an agent-ambassador, who must always be within reach of the electors, to right the wrongs inflicted by an arbitrary administration—unless he is, on the contrary, asking arbitrary favors. The electors like to feel that their delegate is all-powerful, and nothing provokes them more than a story of failure. "Aren't you the boss?" would be the natural protest. "You who are all-powerful," is a phrase which constantly recurs in the correspondence of our parliamentarians. We recognize in this the naïve attitude of the poor people who have been ground down for centuries by an administration insolent and intolerant of the lower classes. Today they like to think that the personal intervention of their great protector, the deputy, can settle everything. This touching survival of the appeal to the King seated under the oak is explained by Alain's remark: "The door of the deputy should always be open."[4]

It is indeed, as we have said already, a striking delegation of sovereignty, of which the deputies individually and collectively are inordinately proud, although they did not fully appreciate it so long as the

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

régime was still under discussion. After the elections of 1906, when the impression made by the Dreyfus case, Boulangism, and the last attack of Royalism in 1877, had faded into the past, the deputies, irrespective of the political parties to which they belonged, began to realize that only one power survived in the democracy, and that power was their own. It was about that time that they began to use the familiar "thee" and "thou" to each other. Commenting on this, Robert de Jouvenel writes in the *République des Camarades:* "Actually there is left less difference between two deputies, although one may be a revolutionary and the other not, than between two revolutionaries, one of whom is a deputy and the other is not."[5]

This *esprit de corps,* which seems to be increasing, arises partly from a feeling of the deputies that they must stand together on the defensive. We are apt to picture the member of the Chamber as a cringing creature, using back streets in order to hide from the contemptuous public. This may, perhaps, be true in Paris on certain days of military demonstration, but usually employees on the trains cannot be too civil and porters never make him wait. He has all the prestige of a man traveling on a pass, and in a crowd he would not dream of standing in queue—a point on which he is extremely touchy. At certain official dinners the Field Marshals have to be placed at the lower end of the table because a dozen deputies must go in first. This touchiness of etiquette is sometimes ridiculous, but on reflection it is not surprising when one considers the intoxicating effect of sovereign power. A deputy will not say in so many words like

[5] Robert de Jouvenel, *La république des camarades,* p. 17.

Louis XIV, *"L'état, c'est moi,"* but many of them certainly think so. At any rate, although the Chamber looks upon the Presidency of the Republic, the Senate, and the Government as useful and highly respectable institutions, nevertheless in their opinion it is the man elected by the people who must always have the final word. This also is the opinion of the electors, though not so much of those you will meet in the Paris salons, as the millions of nobodies who make up the French nation.

This is a singular *régime,* arising almost entirely from distrust and protest. It is by questions and control that the member makes his power felt, and it is by becoming as Minister the head of an administration that he tries to force his will upon the impenetrable ranks of the civil servants. But, as La Rochefoucauld remarks, "One may give advice, but one cannot influence conduct." The civil servant wins out in the end, for as he alone knows the technique and routine, the Minister's influence is greatly reduced in actual practice. A permanent rule of suspicion is developed from this. According to Alain, "The control exerted by democracy is nothing less than the power continually on the alert to dispose alike of kings and specialists the moment they do not work for the good of the greatest number."

But according to Robert de Jouvenel, "The democracy based on control has fallen complacently asleep, since the Minister now works hand in hand, even against Parliament, with the men whom he has been appointed by Parliament to control."[6] This is also the opinion of that most competent judge, M. Charles Seignobos: "The ministers, once they form part of

[6] *Ibid.,* p. 143.

the tradition, are constrained to work in harmony with their subordinates, the civil servant, to carry on the traditional and automatic routine.'"[7] Nevertheless, he considers that sooner or later by means of the budget, and especially by questions in Parliament, the Chamber brings them back under its control.

This control, despite all, has its virtues. I was attached for some time to one of our chief administrative departments. Usually we did our share of work conscientiously in a quiet atmosphere of daily routine, but there were days when one hardly recognized the place—the director had nerves, the letter-files seemed to pile up hectically on the tables, and the typists all had their teeth on edge. There was a question to be asked in the House by a deputy . . . and everyone jumped except the porters! This intervention of the deputy serves thus as a spur to keep the horse panting, even when it is not in use. It also acts as a master-key, able to open and track down everything.

It is really an exaggeration to say that beneath this reserve of parliamentary control, the Napoleonic tradition survives in its entirety within the civil service of France. A very interesting adaptation is now reviving the spirit of our local administration in the French "*départements.*" For many years, actually since the early days of the Third Republic, the prefects have come to receive their political instructions almost as much from the deputies elected in the *département* (provided they are republicans) as from the Minister of the Interior. More recently the prefect

[7] Charles Seignobos, *Histoire de l'Europe contemporaine,* I, 284.

has come to play a real leading part in his own *département,* but essentially he is an administrator, a fact which has brought about closer and closer relations between him and the *Conseil Général,* which is the elected local assembly of the *département.* As a matter of doctrine nothing is officially changed and the prefect is still only responsible to the central authority, as he was in the time of Napoleon. But it wouldn't be any easier for him to direct the business of his *département*—daily becoming more complicated—if he did not have the confidence of the local assembly. The automobile used by the prefect and paid for by the *Conseil Général,* constitutes a symbol of their close relationship. This local democracy which is coming into being, is Swiss in spirit and very earnest in the management of its own affairs, and here at last we have found something really constructive.

France has never sat back and waited for the politicians to put things in order for her. Indeed the best side of French life has been developed according to a very different plan. The family lends its aid by assuming scores of duties—social duties, they would be called in other countries—and production evolves according to its own laws. The deputies, imbued with their democratic orthodoxy, are almost childishly indignant if by force of circumstances their power sometimes must reach its limits. The philosophers have no illusions, however, for Alain says: "Reforms, social work, and new laws are more determined by circumstance and working conditions than by the will of the electorate."[8] Perhaps that is why, after all, the politicians really do less harm than we think.

[8] Alain, *Éléments d'une doctrine radicale,* p. 124.

III

The Contrast between the French and Anglo-Saxon Democracies.

In conclusion, let us consider the aim of the French democracy. Essentially it seems to be freedom for the individual, politically by resistance to "tyranny" and intellectually by resistance to the intervention of the church. To express it more plainly, no individual need be dictated to, on pretext of government, by anyone whose authority he questions. Whether or not the *régime* results in a higher standard of living for the people is a secondary consideration. Under these circumstances—and here we come right to the point—democracy, like religion is a state of mind, a desire for liberty, and a "constant effort to destroy any trace of monarchy as soon as it comes back into existence." This conception of democracy is probably only practical because it is opposed by the contrary conception, for it would hardly continue to exist in France if it were not for the perpetual menace of reaction. Taking this gloomy view, Michelet loved the people all the more, because in his eyes they were "suffering." Also it justifies Barrès in his conclusion that a "permanent danger does useful service to the Republic."

We lavish our best energies on this doctrine of individualism, which accounts for the rather inefficient material achievement of our democracy, such things not being its real aim. So long as we keep this in mind, all sorts of paradoxes are easily explained. For instance, there is the classical example of our discussion in the Chamber on the railroads. The intervention of the Left inevitably tends to ask increased

wages, employees' right to be members of trade unions and organize strikes, the purchase of the company by the state, and curses called down upon the high-handed methods of financiers! Anyone who now comes and demands that the railway should be properly run is sure to be called a conservative! In France we take the same attitude toward our telephones, our arsenals, and even when it comes to saving the franc as long as the franc is not on the border of the abyss. Alain considers Pelletan an ideal Minister of Marine, because he takes all the conceit out of the Catholic General Staff, makes a hell for the rich contractors, and backs up syndicalism in the arsenals . . . but as for warships, never a cent!

These opposing points of view emphasize the essential difference between the Left and the conservative. If it is a question of telephones, for example, the conservative is fool enough to simply insist that they should give reasonable service, but a thoroughgoing politician of the Left will make sure first that the state monopoly of telephones (which is a dogma for him) will not be given up to private industry. "But wouldn't the service be better this way?" people ask. Now this argument would not be considered a good one by the Left because the real aim of the Left is not that the service should be good. The Center will deal with public works, but the Left treats them as politics. This evidently is the opinion of M. Thibaudet when he declares: "The political economist of the Right is an economist, but the political economist of the Left is a politician—take Blum on the capital levy, for example."[9] So long as

[9] Albert Thibaudet, *La république des professeurs.*

politics are the first consideration in the system, we can hardly hope to achieve materially great things, in fact the *ancien régime* was better off in this respect. If the Republic has accomplished some fine results successfully in that line, it has not always been because democracy insisted upon it.

Our democracy is Latin in origin, and therefore unlike the Anglo-Saxon democracies where practical social accomplishments are the first consideration. Their program is to increase the comfort and material welfare of mankind, but they do not worry very much about its intellectual freedom. They have a practical aim which they expect to achieve through moral coöperation. "We give people leisure so that they can read books," writes M. Étienne Fournol, "but they (the Anglo-Saxons) give them leisure so that they can have an automobile."[10] This democratic formula which arose from Puritanism is an Anglo-Saxon invention and has no connection with our rational conception. Politically the Anglo-Saxon state is moral rather than intellectual; and although it fully recognizes the rights of man, it drags in social duties which from our point of view seriously hamper his liberty. Take as an example the remarkable development of the Department of Public Health in the Puritan democracies. M. Fournol is quite right when he insists that this intrusion of hygiene into politics is not merely an extension of the duties of the state as in the case of legislation over the speed of the automobile: "This system interferes with your principles, and shatters your personal freedom. Inspectors come to your house, examine, count, and

[10] Étienne Fournol, "L'esprit démocratique français, est-il mort?"

analyse what you eat and drink; they disinfect your rooms, and supervise your habits, all in the name of hygiene, health, the race, and of eugenics. . . . Such rules infringe upon one's liberty more than we realize, but it is marvelous how they put up with it in some countries!" Yes, M. Fournol is quite right, it is not simply an extension of our politics. It is a different conception of society, customs, life, and of the individual himself. It is hardly compatible with life in France which is based on an entirely different set of principles, and especially on another scale of values. The emphasis in the one case is laid on the individual who thinks, and in the other on the individual who lives.

Finally, what do we wish the community to stand for, the individual or production? It is the old contrast between nominalism and realism. According to the first you must sacrifice results, and according to the second the individual. Which will humanity choose in the future? If it prefers to be well equipped, comfortable, and with a high standard of living, the answer is clear: Hoover. Make no mistake! it is on the American plan that the world is revising its estimates.

Yet, if mankind is ever again preoccupied with the question of the individual, his thoughts, and his right to think for himself, it is not talk about vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, and adding machines that will move the world. French idealism, with its motive power still intact, will regain its old interest. Our old mystical way of viewing politics, although insufficient in its social efficiency, explains itself and to a certain extent justifies itself by an instinctive and a

persistent determination to safeguard the individual: and there lies the vital interest whose promptings France will likely never deny.

APPENDIX I

The Strength of the Various Parties in the Chamber since the War.

I. *Session of the Bloc National,* 1919–1924 (617 deputies).

1. Left	180	68 Socialists, 24 Republican Socialists, 88 Radical-Socialists.
2. Center	216	58 Republican party, 108 Left Republicans, 50 Republicans of the Left.
3. Right	221	185 Progressives, 36 Independents.

II. *Session of the Cartel,* 1924–1928 (582 deputies).

1. Left	328	105 United Socialists, 42 Republican Socialists, 140 Radical-Socialists, 41 Left Radicals.
2. Center	80	44 Left Republican Democrats, 36 Republicans of the Left.
3. Right	146	104 Union of Republican Democrats, 28 Independent (anti-Republicans), 14 Democrats.
4. Communists	28	

III. *Session of 1928,* 1928–1932 (612 deputies).

1. Left	270	101 United Socialists, 122 Radical-Socialists, 12 Republican Socialists, followers of Chabrun, 19 Republican Socialists, followers of Violette, 16 Independents of the Left.
2. Center	162	52 Left Radicals, 29 Democratic and Social party, 17 Radical and Social group, 64 Republicans of the Left.
3. Right	165	103 Union of Republican Democrats, 18 Popular Democrats, 44 Independents, generally anti-Republican.
4. Communists	13	
5. Abstentions	2	

APPENDIX II

Principal Divisions since 1924.

I. *Session of the Cartel.*

1. Fall of the François-Marsal Ministry: June 10, 1924.

Left	327	
Right	217	

2. Weakening of the Herriot Ministry: April 9, 1925.

For the Government	290	Little Cartel.
Against the Government	242	Abstention of the Left Radicals.

3. Vote of Confidence in Caillaux: July 12, 1925.

In favor	295	Right, Center, Government Radicals, Republican Socialists.
Against	228	Communists, United Socialists, a few Republican Socialists, Radical-Socialists of the Left.

4. Vote of Confidence in Poincaré: July 31, 1926.

In favor	345	Almost the entire Chamber.
Against	135	United Socialists, Communists, a small left wing of Radical-Socialists.

II. *Session of 1928.*

1. Stabilization of the Franc: June 24, 1928.

In favor	448	
Against	18	
Abstentions	134	Including 100 United Socialists, 19 Union of Republican Democrats.

2. Vote of Confidence in Poincaré: June 29, 1928.

In favor	451	Including 107 Radical-Socialists.
Against	120	96 United Socialists, 10 Communists, 7 Radical-Socialists.

3. Vote of Confidence in Poincaré: January 11, 1929.

In favor	325	Center, Right.
Against	251	116 Radical-Socialists, 98 Socialists, 11 Communists, 5 Independents of the Left, 15 Republican Socialists of both groups, 5 others.
Abstentions	10	

4. Decision to Deal Immediately with the Missionary Congregations Bill: March 14, 1929.

In favor	323	Right, and almost all the Center.
Against	254	111 Radical-Socialists, 97 United Socialists, 11 Communists, 9 Left Radicals.
Abstentions	8	

5. Ratification of the Mellon-Bérenger Treaty: July 20, 1929.

In favor	300	Right and Center, less about 40 dissenting votes, and a few Radical-Socialists. . . .
Against	292	Communists, Socialists, and most of the Radical-Socialists, about 40 dissenters from the Right and Center groups.
Abstentions	10	
Absent	7	

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